

*Brandon Boal*

# Peoria, Iowa

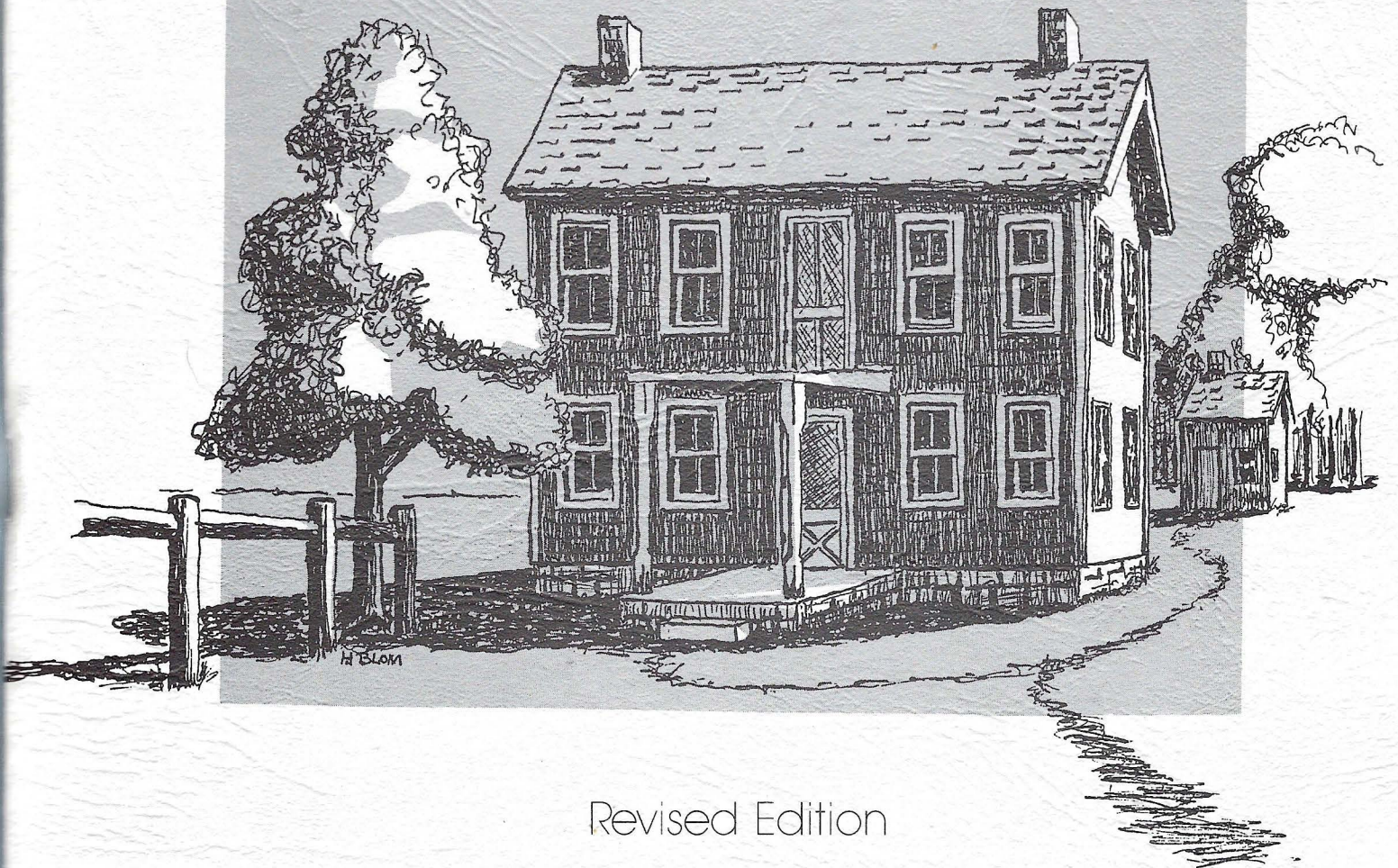
## A Story of Two Cultures

With an In-depth Look at the "Hollander Fires"

1853 - 1993

J.P. Dahm

D.J. Van Kooten



Revised Edition

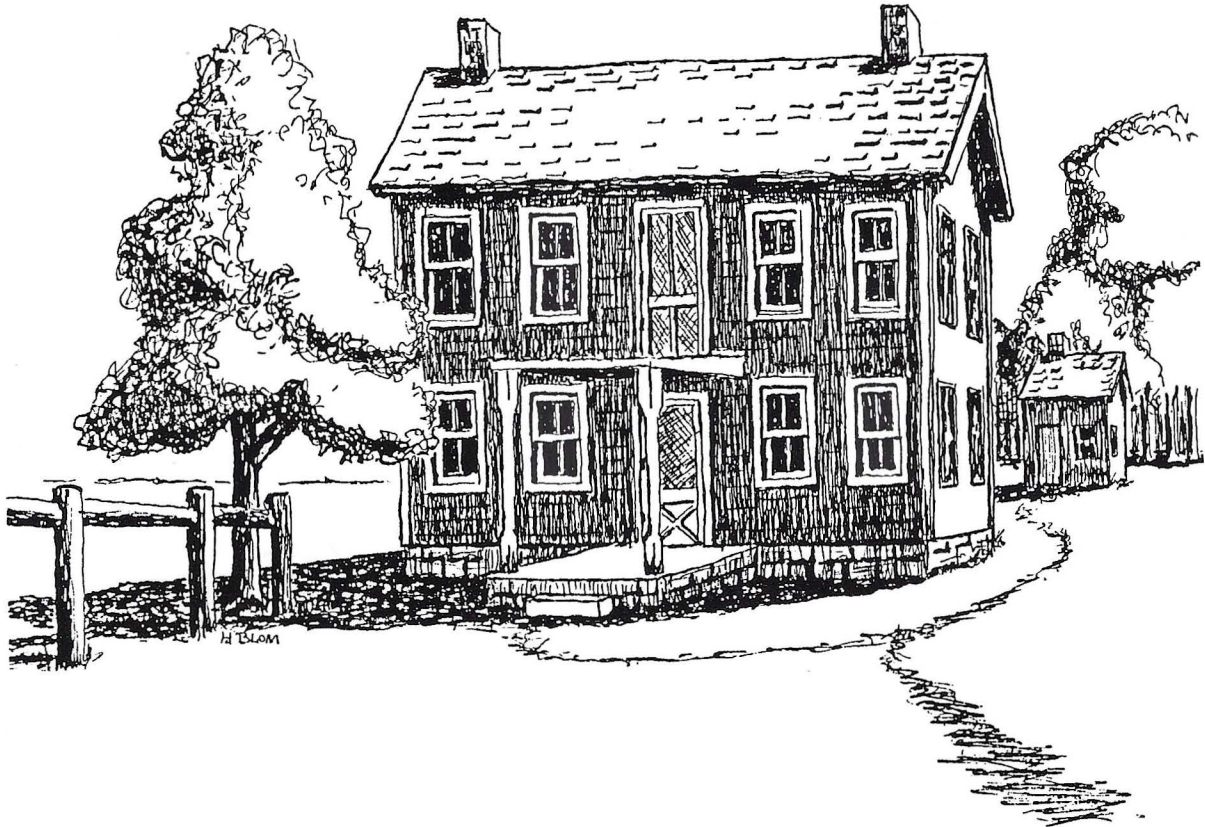












The Peoria House, or Peoria Hotel, was located in the town of Peoria during the latter part of the 1800s. It served as a lodging place for travelers and visitors as well as a dining place. Near the turn of the century it was moved one mile south and east of town where it served as a farm home for many more years.



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## Preface

A reporter in the January 6, 1876 issue of The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald wrote, "Peoria, a very quiet unpretending little village, nestled cosily among the hills, surrounded on all sides by good farms. We have some live, wide-awake farmers in our vicinity, men willing to work and ready to do anything toward building up and elevating society."

It is about this village that this book has been written.

Much has happened in the one hundred and forty years since Peoria was founded. When it began, the telegraph and railroad were just new inventions. The Civil War had not yet begun and the country was in much turmoil over the issue of slavery. The state of Iowa was sparsely settled. The land was rich and fruitful.

Many people have referred to these as the "good old days." Others have said, "It's good they are past!" Most of it was hard work with long days behind the walking plow. The country doctor had his crude instruments, unsanitary methods and mud roads. A recent visit to the Living History Farms brings out these details clearly.

What does a small rural community produce that is lasting? Perhaps its only lasting achievement is the people the community produces. Peoria is no exception in having teachers, bankers, lawyers, ministers, doctors and nurses, who once called this area home. There are many people who have gone from this community to almost every walk of life.

This revised edition is printed nine years after the first edition was printed in 1984. It includes all of the information published earlier, plus an update of new and corrected material now found in this printing.

A special addition to this revised edition, however, is a graphic and detailed description of the problem years of 1917-1920, in which the mixing of the cultures herein described, precipitated a large amount of hatred and unrest. This conflict led to what the newspapers called "The Hollander Fires."

This writing is done seventy-five years after that period of time. Fortunately, time has healed wounds and many of today's youth are unaware that the events of these years ever existed.

I trust you will find these records to be accurate. I have contacted many people for interviews and help. My thanks to all of you who encouraged me with ideas, pictures, stories and drawings. To the best of my ability, I have written only what I believe to be true. Where I have erred or misrepresented the truth, I ask your pardon.

James P. Dahm  
1993



## Chapter I

# Before Peoria

The western hemisphere was an uncharted, unknown region to the white man until possibly the year 1000, when Leif Ericson is believed to have touched the continent of North America. Later in 1492, Columbus discovered the American continent. From 1565 to 1607 the first white settlers established homes in St. Augustine, Florida, and in Jamestown, Virginia, respectively. Yet the heart of the North American continent, drained by the Mississippi River and its tributaries, lay quiet and undisturbed.

The adventures and struggles of the white man were yet foreign to Iowa. The Appalachian Mountains served as a national barricade to exclude all who might intrude. Probably the first white people (Europeans) privileged to have the first glimpse of Iowa were Father Jacques Marquette, a French missionary, and Louis Joliet, a Canadian trader, with their party in 1673. Coming from Quebec, they followed the Wisconsin River in birch canoes until they entered the Father of Waters, as they called the Mississippi River. They traveled downstream for eight days from what is known today as McGregor, until they noticed in the muddy bank the footprints of men. Frightened, yet curious, they disembarked, followed the steps as they led to an Indian village on the banks of the Des Moines River at Keokuk. These white men were warmly received by the Illinois Indians.<sup>1</sup> In 1682 La Salle, the French adventurer, reached the mouth of the Mississippi and claimed for Louis XIV, king of France, all the land drained by it and its tributaries. He further honored his sovereign by naming the vast area Louisiana.

In 1803, Napoleon was at war with England. Fearing that he might lose the fight and the Louisiana Territory, he offered the territory for sale to President Jefferson in 1803, for fifteen million dollars.

### Territory of Iowa – State of Iowa

By virtue of an act of Congress, the "Territory of Iowa" was constituted on the third day of July,

1838. On December 28, 1846, it was admitted into the Union as the 29th state. The first General Assembly under the State organization convened at Iowa City, November 30, 1846. The Capital was first located at Iowa City. In January 1855, on the 15th of the month, Governor Grimes approved the bill relocating the seat of government within two miles of the Raccoon Fork of the Des Moines River, and providing for the appointment of commissioners for that purpose.<sup>2</sup>

On October 19, 1857, Governor Grimes issued a proclamation declaring the city of Des Moines, the capital of Iowa. In November, 1857, the seat of government was moved from Iowa City to Des Moines. The state records and goods were hauled in bobsleds, drawn by oxen, from Iowa City. On January 11, 1858, the Seventh General Assembly convened in Des Moines.

The first capitol building erected in Des Moines was too small and inadequate for the growing needs of the state. An act was passed and approved April 13, 1870, providing for the erection of a new one. When completed, Iowa had one of the finest and most substantial capitol buildings in the Union. Today's Capitol building was dedicated in January, 1884, and completed July 4, 1886, at a cost of \$3,296,256.<sup>3</sup>

Iowa originally had only two counties. The southern half of Iowa was called Des Moines County, and the northern half was known as Dubuque County. From time to time, portions of these large areas were cut off to form new counties. Naming these new counties was the duty of the Legislature.

### Population Grows

On June 1, 1832, there were probably no more than fifty white persons in the state. In 1838, when Iowa was constituted as a territory, the population was 10,531. The settlements were chiefly in the southeastern part of the state and along the Mississippi River. In 1846, at statehood, Iowa's population was 102,388.<sup>4</sup> By 1925, the



population reached 2,419,927, ninety-two percent of whom were native born. In 1940, it reached 2,538,268,<sup>5</sup> and in 1960, 2,757,537.

Albert M. Lea, a United States Congressman, is the man credited with giving the name Iowa, a name which means "beautiful land." To the pioneer from the dark forest of the East, the prairie of Iowa meant the beauty of light and space. Mark Twain said of Iowa, "I remember Iowa at Muscatine on the Mississippi for its summer sunsets. I have never seen any on either side of the Atlantic Ocean that equalled them. They (the sunsets) used the broad, smooth river as a canvas, and painted on it every imaginable dream of color."<sup>6</sup>

## Mahaska County – Early History

The territory occupied by Mahaska County was part of the purchase made by the United States Government from the Sac and Fox Indians in October, 1842. The Indians agreed to move off the land by May 1, 1843.<sup>7</sup>

Andreas wrote,<sup>8</sup>

During the month of April, 1843, many people collected and camped on land within the limits of the county waiting for the Indian claims to expire. Few of them attempted to sleep on the night of the last of April and as soon as their watches indicated the hour of twelve (midnight), they commenced marking their claims. It so happened that many of them made their locations and commenced making improvements simultaneously, and it was, therefore, impossible to tell who was the first. The principal settlements first made were on Six Mile Prairie between Oskaloosa and the Des Moines River, a beautiful section of country well calculated to attract the eye of the pioneer. These settlers did not know what county they were in until the following September, when the land was surveyed into townships.

## First Dwelling

The first dwelling occupied by the whites on the soil of what is now Mahaska County was erected in 1842, about one mile above the present city of Eddyville, by one McBeth, while the county was yet in the possession of the Indians. Eddyville was then an Indian village known as Hard Fish's Village. Here J. P. Eddy had a trading point, from

which came the modern name of the town. A short distance from this village McBeth built his cabin, though it is doubtful that he lived in it. It is said to have been occupied by John B. Grey and his family during the winter of 1842-1843.<sup>9</sup>

The greatest number of the earliest settlers of Mahaska County were from Ohio and Indiana; some were from Illinois, a few from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Tennessee, but Ohio furnished the greatest number.<sup>10</sup>

Phillips, when reflecting on the early settlers, wrote,<sup>11</sup>

This part of Iowa did not have for its first settlers a lot of thieves and schemers. There may have been a few of that sort, but if there were I can't think of any just now. All that I know, and I knew a good many, were honest and obliging, willing that their neighbors should enjoy all the rights they claimed for themselves. They were generally God-fearing, Christian people, and had faith in God and in one another. The first settlers in the town of Oskaloosa, and the country immediately surrounding it were the people I knew most about in the pioneer days. There were little groups of settlers here and there all over the county. I knew the reputation of almost all, and was personally acquainted with many of those who were among the first to make homes in the wilderness. There was Dr. Warren who lived in the extreme western part of the county; he practiced medicine, and was well spoken of as a physician, and was a grand, good man. He was a devout Methodist, and would go a long way to attend a religious meeting, especially Methodist. He was a licensed preacher, but did not take a regular circuit.

The official organization of the county took place on March 1, 1844. On April 1, of the same year, election of county officers was held.<sup>12</sup> Of the three locations proposed for the county seat, the commissioners chose "the Narrows," a point on the watershed between the Des Moines and the South Skunk Rivers, now known as Oskaloosa.<sup>13</sup>

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>George F. Robeson, The Government of Iowa (Chicago: Allyn and Bacon, 1944), p.9.

<sup>2</sup>Tracy Centennial Book, 1875-1975, p.8.

<sup>3</sup>General Civics for Iowa Schools (Mason City: Kipto Loose Leaf Co., New Revised Edition).

<sup>4</sup>B. F. Gue, History of Iowa (New York City: The Century History Co., 1903).

<sup>5</sup>F. E. Compton, Pictured Encyclopedia (Chicago: F. E. Compton & Co., 1940), Vol. VII.

<sup>6</sup>Irving Berdine Richmond, Ioway to Iowa (Iowa City: State Historical Society, 1931), p. 176.

<sup>7</sup>Semira A. Phillips, The History of Mahaska County (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1878), p. 260.

<sup>8</sup>A. T. Andreas, Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa (Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875), p. 407.

<sup>9</sup>Semira A. Phillips, The History of Mahaska County (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1878), p. 260.

<sup>10</sup>Semira A. Phillips, Mahaska County-Reminiscences (Oskaloosa: Herald Print, 1900), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup>Phillips, p.p. 135-136.

<sup>12</sup>Remly J. Glass, Iowa and Counties of Iowa (Des Moines: Historical Society).

<sup>13</sup>Portrait and Biographical Album of Mahaska County (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1887).



## Chapter II

# Early Settlers of Richland Township

Richland Township lies in the northwest corner of Mahaska County. Though furthest removed from the point where the tide of immigration struck the county, it was not the last to be settled. The township was surveyed as congressional township No. 77 north, of range 17 west of 5th principal meridian, in August, 1843. The section lines were run by James Grant and a sub-survey made in September, 1845. In the draft of this survey are found the claims of five people: George Buckley, J. E. Godby, Mr. Leaden, L. Miller, and J. James.<sup>1</sup>

### Earliest Settlers

GEORGE BUCKLEY is believed to be the first settler in Richland Township. He built the first cabin in 1843, about one mile west of the present town of Peoria. The cabin was located west of the Peoria cemetery on the north side of the road.

It is said that Buckley was an Indian trader. He would get honey from the "honey trees" and sell it to the Indians.

As the area became more populated and as the Indians moved west, Buckley also left with the honor of having the Buckley Creek named after him.

J. E. GODBY came to Richland Township in 1843. He is believed to be the same person as John Godbey who was the first man with a family to settle in Richland Township.

MR. LEADEN came to Richland Township in 1843. He built his cabin about one mile north of Peoria.

L. MILLER came to Richland Township in 1843.

J. JAMES came to Richland Township in 1843.

The name of Richland Township was given by WILLIAM LAWRENCE who also came to the township in 1843. He suggested the name because of the productiveness of the soil. The Lawrence

farm was located where Bruce Vander Wal now lives.

### Other Early Settlers<sup>2</sup>

(Quotes taken from Phillips)

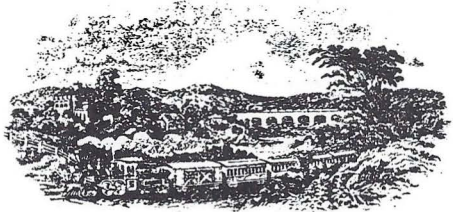
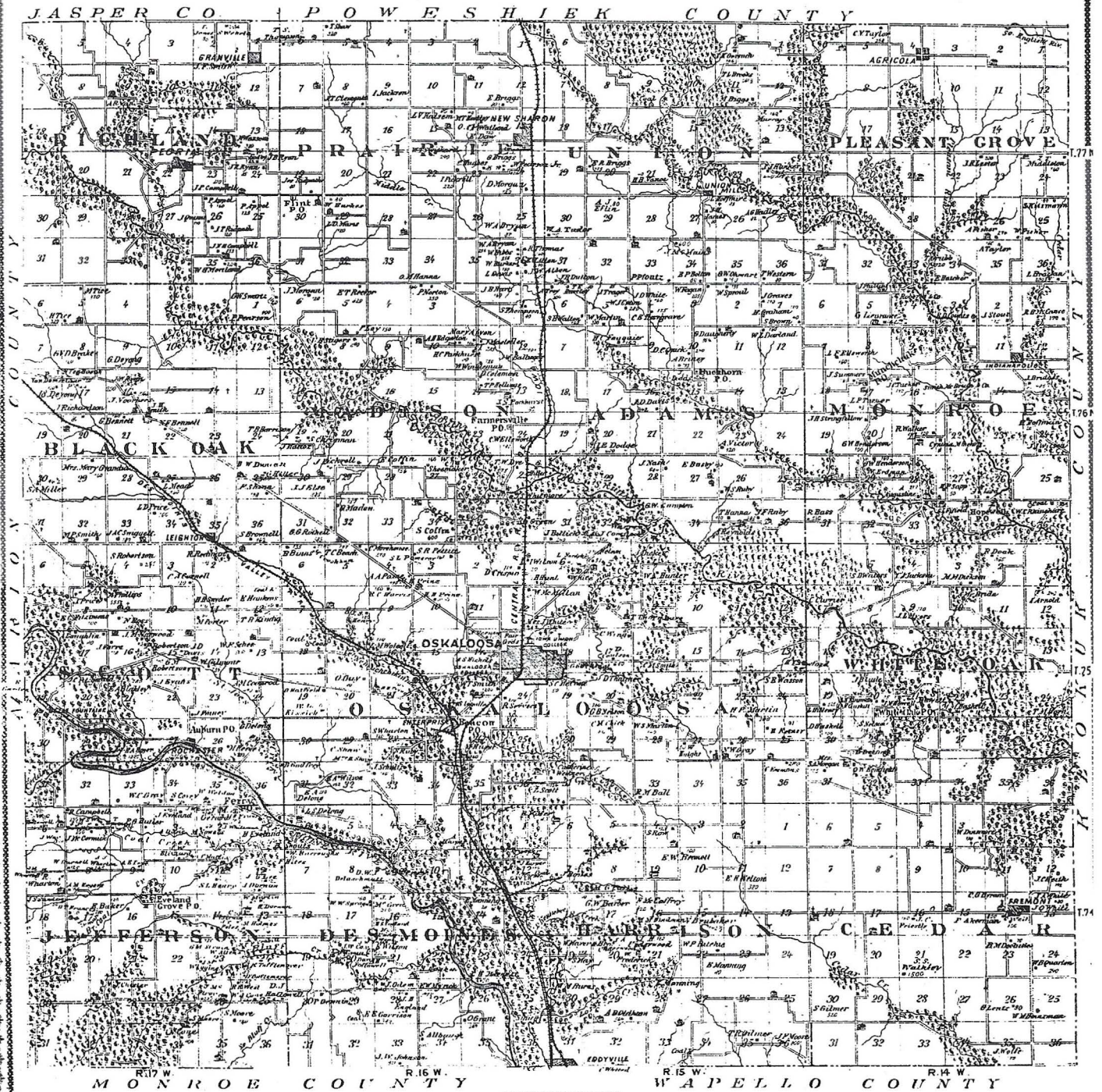
ALLEN GODBEY, farmer, P.O. Peoria; born in Indiana in 1826; came to this State October 15, 1842, and to Richland Township in 1843 (his father, John Godbey, being the first man with a family to settle in Richland Township); he has known his father's family to be without bread from three to four weeks at a time, living on bacon rinds and greens, and it has taken them six weeks to go to the mill in Iowa City, the river being so high it was with difficulty they could get across; the first election in the township was held at his father's house; he helped drive the first drove of hogs to Keokuk that was shipped out of the county; he married Miss Mary E. Bartlett in 1848; she was born in Ohio; have five children, Sylvester, Cameron, Viola, Edward, and Luke. (Walter and Johnson Lunt Farm)

POWEL BUSH was one of the earliest settlers. He lived north of Peoria in the area of the Harold Ozinga farm and west.

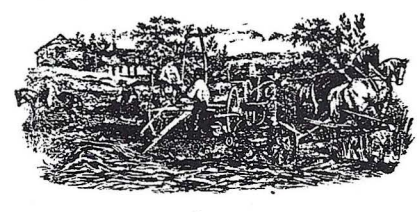
THOMPSON BALDWIN, farmer, Sec. 13; P.O. Granville; born in Champaign county, Ohio, in 1816; came to this county Oct. 28, 1846; owns 400 acres of land; he married Miss Sophronia Phelps, in 1837; she was born in Union Co., Ohio; has three children living; Sylvester, Maria (now wife of O. Hull, Esq., of Smith coun-



# MAP OF MAHASKA COUNTY



Church  
School House  
Farm House  
Post Office  
Mill  
Blacksmith Shop  
Cemetery  
Quarry  
Coal  
Lime Kiln  
Road  
Railroad  
Proposed Railroad  
Timber  
Swamp  
Creek  
Bluff



1875 map, Mahaska County. Courtesy of Chas Beintema.



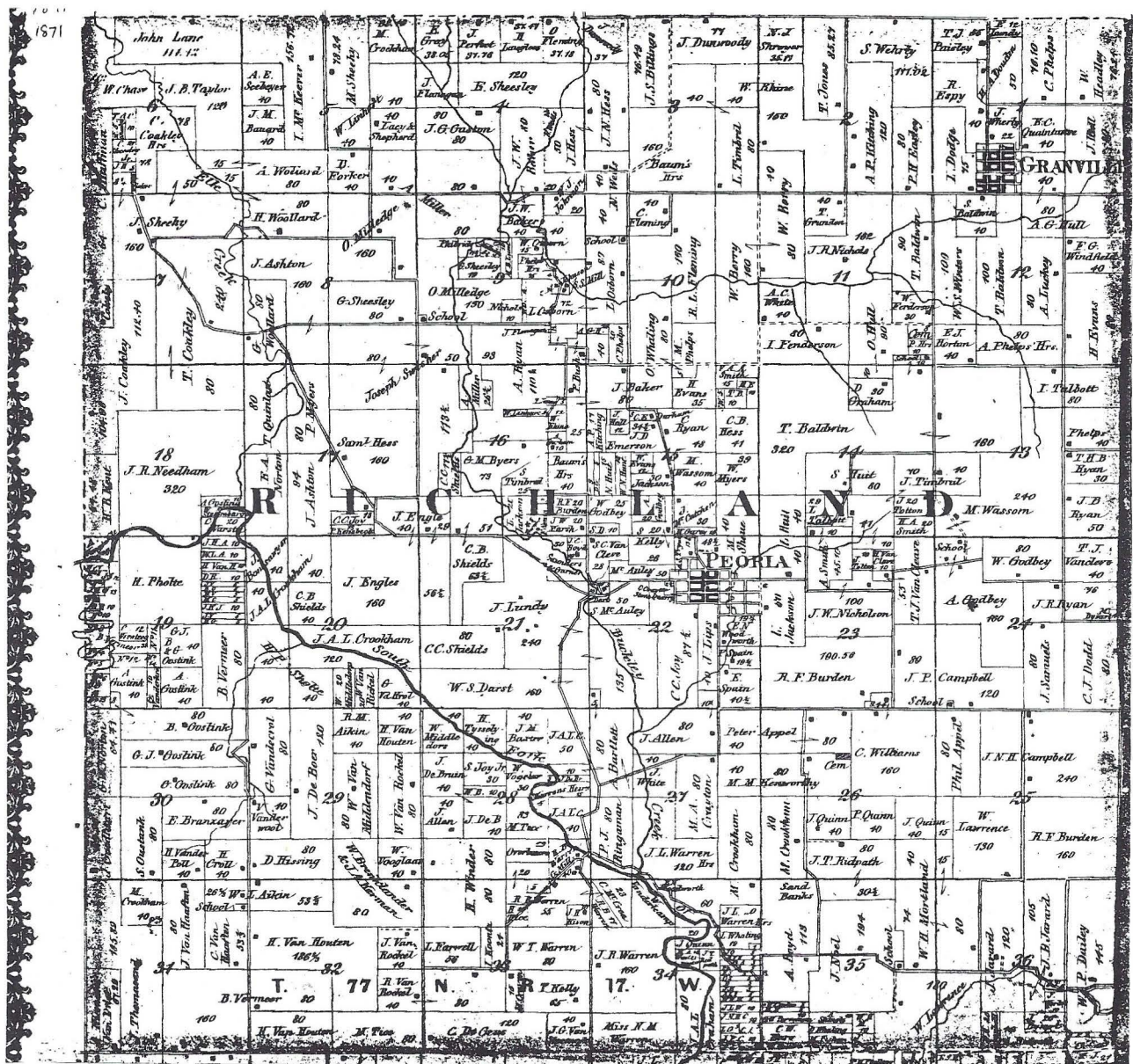
ty, Kan.) and Marley; lost five, Rosaltha, Imogene, Edna, Caroline, and Hannah J. (The first school in Richland Township was in a log cabin belonging to Baldwin in the winter of 1847. The Baldwin farm was north and east of Peoria, later the Klinker place).

LAUREN OSBORN, farmer, Sec. 9; P.O. Peoria; born in Connecticut in 1813, came to this State in 1843, and to this county in 1846; owns 160 acres of land; has held offices of justice of the peace, assessor, township trustee, etc.; he mar-

ried Miss Lois Osborn in 1839; she was born in Connecticut; has three children, Fannie, Ann and Frank. (Charles Van Vark farm)

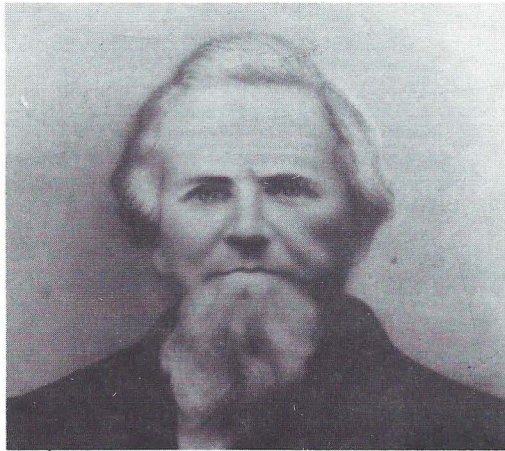
An interesting insight into the life of a prominent pioneer, Moses Wassom, is given by Fran Wherle. Her husband, Lyal, was a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Wassom.

MOSES WASSOM, a farmer, was born in Tennessee in 1817. He came to this county in 1843 and first lived at Duncan's Mill by the Skunk River. He then homesteaded in 1846 where Lyal Wehrle lived (a century farm). He owned 280



1871 map, Richland Township. Courtesy of Loyde Kiser.





Moses Wassom



Elizabeth (Woodside) Wassom.

acres of land. He has held the office of school director, constable, township trustee, and justice of the peace. He married Miss Elizabeth Woodside in 1839 who was also born in Tennessee. They had six children; Cyrus, Monroe, William, Mary, Sophronia and Laura A. who married William Tell Wehrle.

Wassom was probably the first Justice in the township. He held that office in 1846.<sup>3</sup> (Elsewhere it is found that Allen Goody arrived in 1844. He is also listed as the first Justice of the Peace.) Wassom was a breeder of roadster horses and was for years the owner of Monarch which was, in his time, the best horse in the country.

Obituary of Moses Wassom May 7, 1817 - June 22, 1891.

#### OBITUARY

##### MOSES WASSOM

In the death of Moses Wassom, which occurred at his home near Peoria, on Monday morning, June 22, the community lost a strong and upright man, one widely known and as well liked as he was known. He was also one of the pioneer settlers of the county and especially of Richland township. He selected for his homestead one of the best pieces of land in the country and here made his home, adding to the farm by degrees and to its comforts and conveniences until it was one of the best and most comfortable farm homes in the county. He was a lover of good stock and his farm was stocked always with the best grades of hogs, short-horn cattle and especially roadster horses. Mr. Wassom was for years the owner of Monarch, in his time the best horse in the country. With these Mr. Wassom was greatly interested. He was a good farmer, a broad-minded, public spirited



The large home of Moses and Elizabeth Wassom built in 1863 to replace the log cabin. The house still stands today and is the home of Mrs. Lyal (Fran) Wehrle (a Century Farm).



The log cabin of Moses and Elizabeth Wassom, where they lived in 1846 when they came to Richland Township.



man ever willing to help his neighbors and friends. He was a good neighbor and a man who always stood by his friends. His fatal ailment resulted from the effects of la grippe, followed by affection of the heart. The funeral services occurred Wednesday and were conducted by the Masonic Fraternity of which he was an enthusiastic member. Wednesday afternoon, and interment was made in the Baldwin cemetery. The funeral was attended by a large concourse of sympathizing neighbors and friends. Deceased leaves a wife, two sons and a daughter all grown, another daughter having died from the effects of a snake bite a few years ago. Deceased was born in Tennessee in '17, but had lived in Mahaska county nearly 50 years.

#### RESOLUTIONS OF RESPECT

Death's decree in the death of an old and respected citizen, brother, father and companion: Brother Wassom was born in Tennessee, May 7th, 1817. He was married to Elizabeth Woodside, Sept. 12th, 1839, came to Iowa in 1843, and settled near Duncan's Mill, Mahaska county, Ia., where he resided about three years and from whence he removed to his present farm, located in Richland township, where he lived until his death which occurred June 22, 1891.

At a special communication of Central Lodge No. 388, A.F.&A.M., held at Masonic Hall, Peoria, Ia., June 23, 1891, the following resolutions were adopted:

*Whereas*, It has pleased God in his inscrutable wisdom to remove our faithful and dearly beloved brother, Moses Wassom, from our midst, therefore be it.


*Resolved*, That while we bow in submission to the decree of the Supreme Grand Master of the universe, we regret the severing of our fraternal ties and the dropping of this link from our chain of brotherhood.

*Resolved*, That we tender to the bereaved family of the deceased our deep and heartfelt sympathy in their great sorrow, and express to them the belief that He who hath thus grievously afflicted will also comfort and sustain the widow and the fatherless in this their hour of trouble.

*Resolved*, That the lodge room be draped in mourning for the space of thirty days in token of our brotherly sorrow and affliction.

*Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the family of the deceased brother, and these resolutions be published in the county papers.

E. H. WOODWORTH, }  
C. H. JOHNSON, } Com.  
PETER APPEL. }

 **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,**  
**To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:**

Whereas, in pursuance of the Act of Congress, approved SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1850, ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING BOUNTY LAND TO CERTAIN OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS WHO HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN THE MILITARY SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES," Warrant No. 22,313 for 80 acres, issued in favor of *Nicholas Whitmouth, Private in Captain Booths Company, Seventh Regiment Virginia Militia War 1812.*

has been returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE, with evidence that the same has been duly located upon the *South West quarter, of the South East quarter, and the South East quarter of the South West quarter of Section Thirteen Township Seventy Seven North of Range Seventeen West in the District of Lands Subject to Sale at Fort Des Moines Iowa containing Eighty acres* according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE, by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, *which has been assigned to Moses Wassom.*

NOW KNOW YE, That there is therefore granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said *Moses Wassom* the tract of Land above described; TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said *Moses Wassom* heirs and assigns forever.

In testimony whereof, I, *Franklin Pierce* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made Patent, and the SEAL OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the *First* day of *February* IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD one thousand eight hundred and *fifty four* and of the Independence of the United States the seventy-eight.

BY THE PRESIDENT: *Franklin Pierce*

Document transferring 80 acres of land from the United States of America to Moses Wassom on February 1, 1854. Signed by Franklin Pierce, President, USA.



Obituary of Elizabeth (Woodside) Wassom  
March 10, 1821 - June 22, 1892

OBITUARY

Elizabeth Woodside was born in Tennessee on March 10th A.D. 1821, and was united in marriage to Moses Wassom Sept. 12th 1839. With her husband she moved to Iowa in 1843 being one among the first settlers of Richland Twp. where she has been a resident for the past 48 years. She was a member of the Christian church. An affectionate wife and a devoted mother has left one daughter and two sons to mourn her death. She had suffered much for several years but passed peacefully away as though in a quiet slumber on Wednesday, June 22nd. Aged 71 yrs. 3 mo. 12 days.

The funeral services were held at the house, attended by the relatives and numerous friends of the deceased, Rev. Johnson officiating. The remains were layed to rest in Granville cemetery. She is now free from all earthly sufferings and has gone to dwell with her God and join her husband who was called away but one short year before her. The many friends of this neighborhood extend their sympathies to the bereaved children asking them to trust in God.

—Cor.

ROBERT B. WARREN, miller and farmer, Sec. 28; P.O. Peoria; born in Tennessee, in 1829; came to this State in 1841, settling at that time in Lee county; in 1843 he came to this county (his father being one of the first settlers) he built the mill known as Warren's Mill in 1846; they were afterwards burned, and rebuilt in 1850; they have three run of stone, and do both custom and merchant work; he has held office of township trustee, township clerk, and justice of the peace; he owns 199 acres of land; he married Emily A. Bingaman in 1855; she was born in Kentucky; has eight children, Ida E., J. Lincoln, Granville E., Mary E., R. Wilbur, Mattie M., Orra E. and O. Lillian; he has seen wheat sold for 30¢ per bushel, and \$2.70 ditto, and pork from \$1.25 he cut and dressed, to \$11 gross; they used to go 80 miles to mill, and it took them three weeks to make the trip.

WM. BERRY, farmer, Sec. 11; P.O. Granville; born in Virginia, in 1814; came to this county in 1848; previous to his

removal to this county he lived in Ohio; he is one of the oldest settlers; his nearest post office when he came, was Oskaloosa; he has held the offices of township trustee and school director; he owns 280 acres of land; married Miss Nancy Johnson; she was born in Ohio; has three children: John H., Laurin B., and Charlie G. (Harold De Vries farm and east)

A.P. KITCHING, (Perry) farmer, Sec. 2; P.O. Granville, born in Indiana, in 1830; came to this county in 1849, and to this township in 1850; owns 140 acres of land; has held the offices of township trustee, township clerk, and justice of the peace; he married Miss Jemima J. Fansher in 1855; she was born in Indiana, and her parents were among the first settlers of the county, her father being one of the men who carried the chain when Oskaloosa was laid out; has six children: Thomas B., Florence V., Asa A., Willie C., Laura A. and Minnie M. (Chan Fleming place. Perry was a cabinet maker and a coffin maker.)

ROBERT LUTHER FLEMING, farmer, Sec. 10; P.O. Peoria; born in Harrison county, West Virginia, September 3, 1811; came to this county in 1852; owns 168 acres of land; has held office of assessor, school director, and township trustee; he married Miss Amy Madox in June, 1833; she was born in Virginia; have nine children, Martha V., Charles, Orin, Justin and Amy Cornelia.

R. L. Fleming was the grandfather of Chan Fleming. He was an ordained minister and preached at the Methodist Church in Peoria. He was defrocked as a southern sympathizer but later was influential in organizing the Christian Union Churches in the area. Fleming was also a school teacher north of Peoria and Galesburg where he walked 8 miles one way to teach!<sup>4</sup>

A. HUNT, wagon maker, Peoria; born in Hunterdon county, New Jersey in 1805; came to this county in 1852; he has worked at his trade since 1823; he has a large apiary and is giving attention to raising bees; he married Miss Mahala



Deaver in 1827; she was born in Maryland; they have five children, Nathaniel B., Nancy, Ellen, Eden and Mary; one son, Levi, enlisted in the 33rd Iowa Infantry and died from disease contracted in the army. (Lived where Jake Dunwoody later lived in Peoria)

GEORGE SHEESLEY, farmer, Sec. 8; P.O. Peoria; born in Fairfield county, Ohio, in 1827; came to this county in 1854; owns 340 acres of land; has held offices of school director and assessor; he married Miss Eliza Peffers, in 1850; she was born in Licking Co., Ohio; has nine children, David E., George P., Mary R., William M., John S., Phebe A., Martha E., Eddie A. and Joseph L. (Bill Andringa farm)

J. N. H. CAMPBELL, farmer, Sec. 35; P.O. Peoria; born in Brown county, Ohio, Jan. 30, 1816; came to this county in 1857; owns 203 acres of land; has held the office of school director, and served as president of the board; he was also a Representative from this county in the Tenth General Assembly; he married Miss Maria McClure, February, 1840; she was born in Illinois; has one child living, Chester C.; lost eleven; one son, Marion, was drowned in Skunk river, July 24, 1878. We copy the following notice from the New Sharon Star: "Captain Marion Campbell was born near Washington, Ill., March 15th, 1841, and came to this county with his parents while young; he enlisted in Co. H, 8th Infantry, in the late war, and was afterwards commissioned Capt. Co. F, and served his country four and a half years with distinction. At the close of the war he married and settled in Mississippi; he was elected to the lower house of the State legislature, and served two years with such efficiency that his constituency elected him Senator. Notwithstanding his life was many times threatened, and he had received many warnings to quit the country, he, like the brave man that he was, stood steadfast at his post, and ever dared to do his duty. He was carried down to death's door with yellow fever; his wife and children sickened and died; he was stripped of all

his property, conducted to the depot, and ordered to leave. It was then he turned his face northward, leaving that for which he had toiled, and that which was dearer still, the graves of his wife and little ones."

JAMES P. CAMPBELL, farmer, Sec. 30; P.O. Peoria; born in Tennessee, in 1829; came to this county in 1851; owns 200 acres of land; he married Miss Harriet E. Bacon, in 1857; she was born in White county, Indiana; he has four children: Minerva, Ira, Ralph, and Matilda. (Arie De Jong - Cornie Vander Linden place south of Peoria)

C. C. JOY, harness maker and hotel keeper; P.O. Peoria; born in Ohio in 1821; came to this county in 1857; owns 93 acres of land; has held offices of school director and township trustee; he married Eunice Davis in 1842; she was born in Ohio, and died in 1850; he afterward married Mary Foust in 1851; she was born in Ohio; has four children living: James M., William M., Benjamin F. and Solomon H.; James and William both enlisted in the 18th Iowa infantry in the late war.

PETER APPEL, farmer, Sec. 26; P.O. Peoria; born in Bavaria, Germany, in 1827; came to this county in 1861; owns 125 acres of land; has held the office of school director; he married Miss Eliza J. Ash, in 1864; she was born in Ohio; has two children by former marriage, Charles E., Phebe J., and one daughter, Frances A., by second marriage. (Tom Vander Hart farm)

Peter Appel died Jan. 29, 1903. A paper clipping read: "Peter Appel, highly esteemed citizen of Peoria dies at his home in Peoria after a 12 week illness, well known to a big number of citizens of Pella and vicinity. Burial at Peoria."

C. B. SHIELDS, farmer and merchant, Sec. 16; P.O. Peoria; born in Washington Co., Pa., in 1834; came to this county in 1868; previous to his removal here, lived 21 years in Champaign county, Ohio; owns 160 acres of land; he is also en-

gaged as a dealer in general merchandise, at Peoria; has served as township clerk and township trustee; he married Miss Susan Engle in 1857; she was born in Champaign county, Ohio; has 3 children, Eva M., Della G. and George E. (Bill Vander Hart farm)

JAMES ENGLE, farmer Sec. 16; P.O. Peoria; born in Pennsylvania in 1813; lived many years in Ohio, coming to this county in 1869; owns 320 acres of land; he married Elizabeth Swisher in 1833; she was born in Pennsylvania; have two children, Susan and George; lost three. (Vernon Van Ee farm)

James and Elizabeth (Swisher) Engle were the great grandparents of Wylda (Jackson) Axmear. Wylda reported that the Engles came to Iowa in a covered wagon. Wylda's grandfather was George Engle who was 17 at the time. George Engle's wife was Sabra.<sup>5</sup>

NATHANIEL CROWDER was a stone cutter who worked in the Quarry. He was born Aug. 24, 1804, and died July 14, 1872. Mary, his wife was born Oct. 15, 1805, and died July 4, 1867. The stone is very unique. The Bible is above the base which is made to look like a tree trunk. It is said Mr. Crowder could not afford a stone so he prepared for his death by carving his own. The stone is located in the Peoria Cemetery.



Tombstone of Nathaniel Crowder.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Semira A. Phillips, History of Mahaska County (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1878), p. 546.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips, pp. 712-720.

<sup>3</sup>Phillips, p. 546.

<sup>4</sup>Chan Fleming, personal interview.

<sup>5</sup>Wylda (Jackson) Axmear, personal interview.



## Chapter III

# Peoria – Its Earliest Days

Warrensville is considered the forerunner to Peoria. It was a hamlet in the southern part of Richland township located on the South Skunk River, two miles south of Peoria. Warrensville was established by Elbert D. Warren, eldest son of the Rev. Dr. James L. Warren, on August 10, 1849. It was here that Elbert Warren began his mill. It was here also that the post office was located with Elbert as the postmaster.

Warrensville was short lived, as it died out with the beginning of Peoria. The name Warren carried on for years, however, as the Warren mill and Warren bridge.

An often-asked question is, "Where did Peoria derive its name?" The answer evades each one that asks the question. Two possibilities exist. One is that an early settler came from Peoria, Illinois. The other is that the name was derived from the Peoria Indian tribe.

It seems logical, however, that Peoria is named for Peoria, Illinois. Vogel writes that the French named Peoria, Illinois for the Peoria tribe of Indians who lived at the strait below present Lake Peoria, which is a wide place in the Illinois River.<sup>1</sup> He states that the Peorias were one of the six tribes of the Illinois confederacy, of whom a few mixed-blood descendants live today in and near Peoria, Oklahoma.

At one time, Iowa had a Peoria in Wayne County and a Peoria City in Polk County. There are fifteen states with places named Peoria, most of which are named for the tribe or for other Peorias.

There has been much disagreement on the meaning of this name. Vogel concludes that the correct definition of Peoria is probably "turkey" and it may be inferred that the name was either that of a tribal totem or of a clan.<sup>2</sup>

### Town Laid Out by Spain

Peoria, located in the center of Richland Township, was laid out on May 21, 1853, by Theodrick Spain on land owned by himself, George

Westlake, and Sanford Haynes. Spain is also credited with laying out Granville, north of Peoria, which was at one time quite a booming town.

Theodrick Spain was born in 1824 in Ohio. It is said that his nickname was "Spec" because he had so many freckles.<sup>3</sup> His father, Thomas Spain, was born in 1785 in Virginia. Theodrick moved to Iowa from Ohio with his wife Mary (Haines) and family in 1851. His occupation is listed as merchant and farmer. One of their children was a son, Sanford Quincy Spain who, at age 13, enlisted in the Civil War in 1863 and served in the 9th Cavalry until his discharge in 1862.<sup>4</sup>

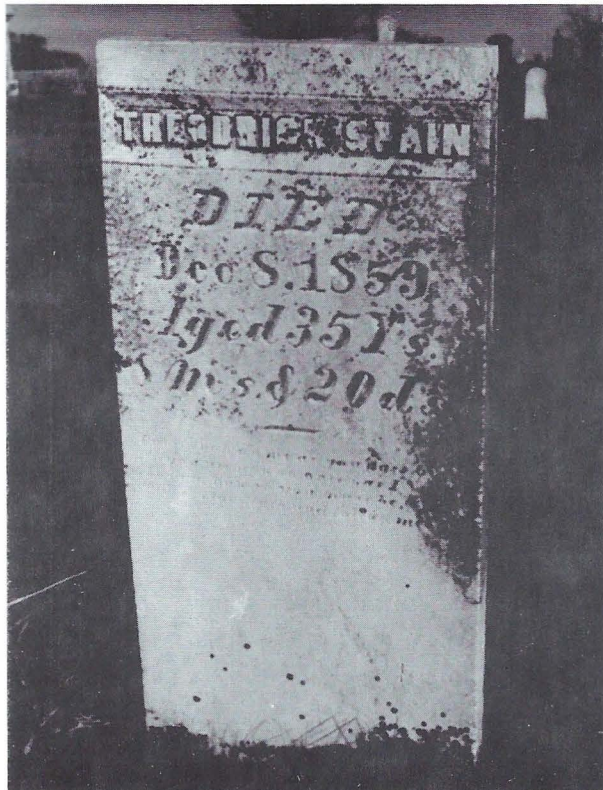
Theodrick Spain died on December 8, 1859 at the age of 35 years, 8 months, and 20 days.\* The cause of his death is unknown. It has been said that he died in a conflict with a thief who was attempting to steal his horse. He interfered and was shot. As others tried to help he said, "Let them go and I will get them later." He lies buried in the local cemetery. The epitaph on his tombstone reads:

Come look on me as you pass by.  
As you are now so once was I.  
As I am now, so you will be.  
Prepare for death and follow me.

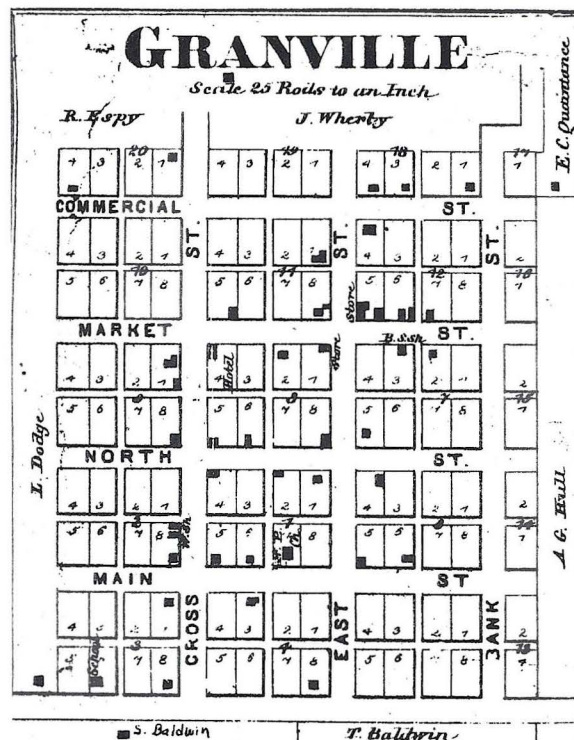
Though not written on his stone, a follow-up has been written elsewhere:

To follow you, I am not content.  
Until I know which way you went!

\*Mary Spain, his widow, later married Martin Sheue. Mary died on March 14, 1891. Martin Sheue was the man who sold two acres of land to the Holland Church in 1894, for \$185.



Tombstone of Theodrick Spain, Peoria Cemetery.



1871 map, Granville.

## Town Grows

The town prospered and grew. The original part was laid out in 1853. Cantril's addition and the west addition were added in 1856, followed by Maxon's addition in 1857.

Population figures also show the growth.<sup>5</sup>

In 1854, the village had 24 people.

In 1873, the village had 125 people.

In 1880, the village had 133 people.

In 1900, the village had 150 people — which no doubt is the maximum in the history of the village.

Today, 1993, the population is 80.

Evidence of the enthusiasm of the community is seen in the January 6, 1876, Peoria report in The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald:

Peoria is situated in the northwest part of the county, two miles from the classical Chicaqua (Indian name for Skunk). A very quiet unpretending little village nestled cosily among the hills, surrounded on all sides by good farms. We have some live, wide awake farmers in our vicinity. Men willing to work and ready to do anything toward building up and elevating society.

## Railroad Fails to Come

It became evident that the coming of the railroad was having a vast influence on the future of small Iowa towns. An 1887 writing explained the problem as it specifically referred to Peoria:<sup>6</sup>

The same influences that have built up or broken down so many towns throughout the length and breadth of the land, have operated against this village. As long as railroads were near, its chance for prosperity was equal to the best, but when roads were built within a few miles, and all general traffic was carried by the improved method, there was no further hope.

The Newton - Taintor - New Sharon railroad came in 1881. Its coming caused Taintor, Ia., to spring up but dealt a death blow to Granville.

Despite the fact that the railroad failed to come to Peoria, the pride of the town's people stayed high. The Peoria reporter in the Oskaloosa Herald of July 22, 1897 wrote the following:

In spite of the hard times our town is



prospering in fine shape and we are not dead by a considerable!

Sheesley and McAuley are doing a large business here this spring. They run a large store where you can purchase almost anything in the line of dry goods, groceries, hardware, queensware and they also handle a fine line of agricultural implements.

S. L. Spain runs a first class store, but only deals in dry goods and groceries. He enjoys a good trade.

Dr. Quire is enjoying a visit from his little sister Veda, of Lynnville.

W. P. Harris has a good harness shop and is a first class workman. He also runs a feed mill and is kept busy with that a good part of the time. He has a gasoline engine to furnish power.

J. S. Wharton and Sons erected a Blacksmith shop here this spring and is run by W. C. & A. T. Wharton.

Sam Hewitt also runs a shop and does considerable business.

J. S. Wharton has purchased the Schoebring property and has moved his family here.

## Story of the Hoff Family

The tragedies, hardships, and sorrows of the pioneers were many. A visit to the early part of the Peoria Cemetery tells of these sorrows, especially the large number of people who died at an early age and the high infant mortality rate.

One of the saddest stories is that of the Hoff family, a mother, father, and three children who all died within six days and who are buried side by side.

The following story is told by Mrs. Wylda (Jackson) Axmear of Delta, Iowa, who is the only known person to have known the story.<sup>7</sup>

The Hoff family lived somewhere in Kansas in 1855. They were coming to Iowa by covered wagon. They stopped overnight in Wichita, where they stayed at a covered wagon camp. The family consisted of a man and wife and four children. They had left their 16 year old daughter back home where she was caring for a neighbor lady who was having a baby. The Hoff's made arrangements to meet their daughter as soon as the neighbor lady was able to travel. The destination was Peoria, Iowa.

The family of five stayed one night at the camp



Tombstones of the Hoff family, father, mother and three children who all died within six days.

in Wichita. There were many sick people at the camp so they left the next morning. The disease was cholera.

When they arrived in Peoria they camped at a camping ground on the hill south of the cemetery. The family of five died one at a time, and in six days all were dead of cholera.

1. Orvel, son of S. & E. Hoff died April 19, 1855, 4 yrs., 10 mo., 3 days.
2. Mary, daughter of S. & E. Hoff, died April 20, 1855, age 13 yrs., 1 mo., 7 days.
3. Hiram M., son of S. & E. Hoff died April 20, 1855, age 19 yrs., 2 mo., 11 days.
4. Eliza, wife of Samuel Hoff died April 24, 1855, age 43 yrs., 11 mo., 14 days.
5. Samuel Hoff died April 24, 1855, age 49 yrs.

Wylda's grandmother (Mrs. George Engle) later came to know the older Hoff girl. She came with the next group of people in covered wagons a few months later. When she arrived she found that all her family was dead and buried.

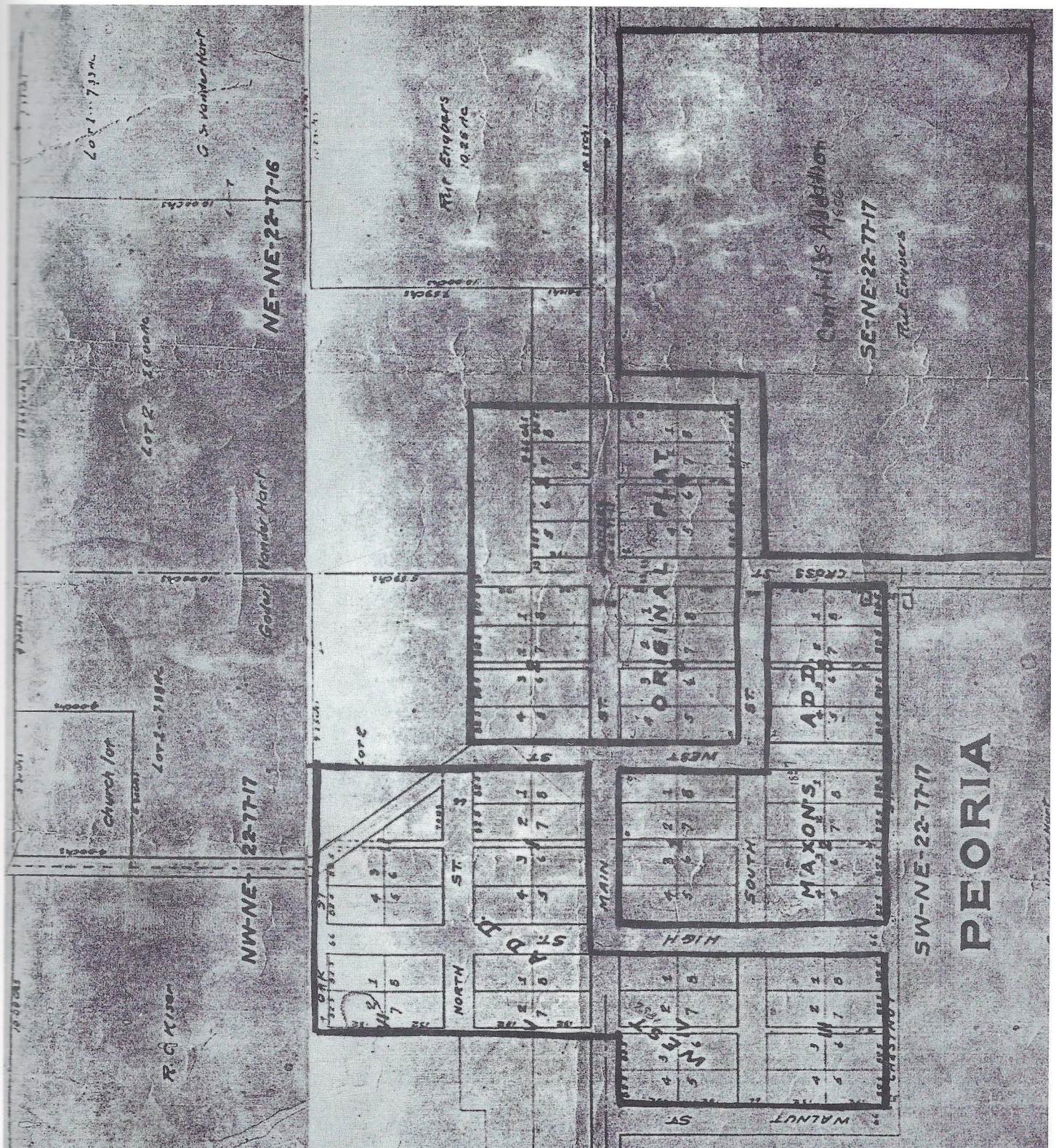
The girl went to work for Leonard M. Jackson (Wylda's great-grandfather) working as a hired girl. She later married one of the Jackson boys.

Why the Hoff family came from Kansas is not known.

## Peoria Riot

During the war between the states there were some who were not in agreement with President Lincoln. These were men who were in sympathy with the Southern Confederacy and were never more light-hearted than when victory came to the Southern army. These men banded together in secret organizations known as "Knights of the Golden Circle" and held meetings. In the north, Confederate sympathizers were known as "Cop-





The original plat and three additions of Peoria.



perheads." They wore a badge of half a butternut or a copper cent as a breast pin.

Raids and disturbances developed, one of which was called the Tally Raid—the story of which is found in detail in Phillip's writings.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after the Tally raid an occurrence took place in the northwestern part of Mahaska county that was in some respects similar. On the 22nd of August, 1863, a so-called Democratic rally was held about one-half mile west of the town of Peoria on the east side of Buckley Creek. Here assembled several hundred men, most of whom were Democrats.

There were at that time near Peoria two soldiers of Co. H of the Third Iowa Infantry, who were home on furlough having been wounded at Jackson, Mississippi. These were Capt. Simon G. Gary and Sgt. Abraham T. Alloway. Gary attended the meeting in the forenoon, and had had some words with some of his political opponents in regard to their wearing of butternut badges. He returned to Peoria about noon and met Alloway. Gary had been quite severely wounded in the thigh, and Alloway slightly wounded in the hip. Gary borrowed a single-barreled pistol from a friend in Peoria, and having indulged in some of the town beer, as was shown on testimony at the trial, he and Alloway started for the meeting. While Capt. James A. Seevers, of Oskaloosa, was addressing the meeting, they arrived on the grounds.

The two wounded soldiers got into an altercation and were persuaded to retire by some of their friends. As they were leaving the grounds a partisan named Mart Myers stepped in front and dared either of them to remove his (Myers) badge. The hated symbol was at once removed and Alloway and Myers clinched.

In the struggle which followed, Myers shot Alloway, who was unarmed. Whereupon the soldier, now suffering from a second wound, snatched the weapon from his antagonist and threw him on the ground, and after striking Myers several times with his pistol, he fell to the ground completely exhausted. Immediately after the first shot was fired, it was followed by the discharge of a number of other weapons. Gary was wounded in the wrist and a Dr. Spain received a wound in the leg. Excitement and consternation followed and the meeting broke up. The few Republicans placed Sergeant Alloway in a spring wagon, but he died before reaching Peoria.

His body was taken to the house of B.F. Wintermute, where the funeral took place a few days afterward. The procession is said to have been one

and one-half miles in length, showing that a soldier's life in Mahaska County was not lightly valued. Alloway was to have been married in a few days to a cousin of his murderer.

Phillips writes:<sup>9</sup>



Tombstone of Sergt. Abraham T. Alloway, Baldwin Cemetery.

The day after the shooting Sheriff Allumbaugh and two marshals, Jesse Dodd and Wm. Johnson, went up to Sugar Grove, and after some difficulty succeeded by strategy in arresting Myers, who was lodged in jail at Oskaloosa.

After lengthy and expensive trials, one in Ottumwa and the other in Albia, in which a hard effort was made by the defense to prove that it was the shot fired by Gary that killed his comrade, the county already having been at a large expense, with no hope of a conviction, the case was dismissed, and Myers remained unpunished for his crime. There is not much wonder that such men went



unpunished when we remember that it was estimated by Gov. Stone in that year that there were 30,000 members in the disloyal organizations of the state.

We have it from those who claim to have seen it, that a three-striped flag with butternut trimmings was exhibited and cheered at the meeting at which this shooting took place, a statement scarcely credible were it not supported by other circumstances equally culpable.

Sergt. Abraham T. Alloway was buried in Baldwin cemetery along the east line of Richland Township. On his tombstone is a U.S. flag above his name. Below his name this epitaph:

Oh my country.

If I die, I die in defense of my country.

### The R. B. Warren Mill

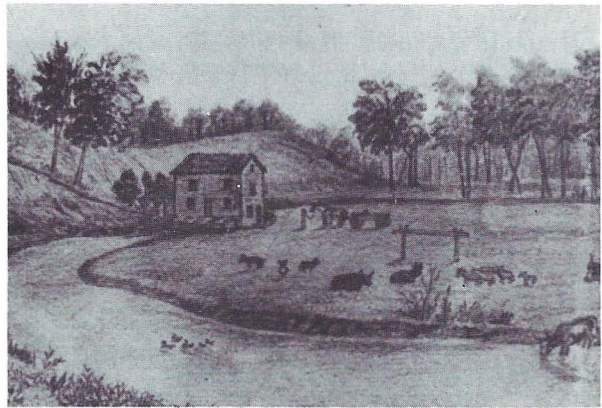
To the pioneers the grist mill was a necessity for the grinding of grain. Grist was ground grain or meal produced from grinding.

The very early settlers went to Whistler's Mill, southeast of Sigourney on the North Skunk. A majority, however, went to Duncan's Mill above Oskaloosa, where a register was kept of those desiring grists and customers were waited on in the order in which their names appeared on the register. It is said that work was thus engaged for three weeks for a constant run day and night. This scarcity of mills, however, was only temporary.<sup>10</sup>

Robert (R. B.) Warren, the son of Rev. Dr. James Warren, was a miller and farmer. He was born in Tennessee in 1829, and came to Iowa in 1841. In 1843, he came to Mahaska County, with his father, one of the first settlers. They built the mill known as the Robert Warren flouring mill on the South Skunk River in 1846 (near the Warren Bridge), just below the present Peoria-Pella bridge. This mill was destroyed by fire but rebuilt in 1850. "They have three run of stone, and do both custom and merchant work."<sup>11</sup>

The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald of Jan. 6, 1876, reported the following:

Two miles south of the town on the Skunk, is situated the R. B. Warren's flouring mill. He has all the late improved machinery and a 1st class mill. (By the way, Ezra Craven is again foreman in the mill, and they are doing business



A drawing of a typical grist mill.

on a large scale.) There are two good steam saw mills within a mile and a half of the town.

The Oskaloosa Weekly Herald, June 14, 1883:

Flouring Mill Burned — Last Saturday evening the water flouring mill of the Hon. Rob't Warren, on the Skunk River, near Peoria, was completely destroyed by fire. The fire broke out in the dust pan of the corn sheller, on the second floor, and the flames spread with the amazing rapidity that marks the destruction of all flouring mills when once fired. But little was saved — a small scale, a bag truck, and a few grists. The mill property was deemed worth \$10,000, and an insurance of \$6,000 was carried, divided equally in the Keokuk State and Des Moines State Companies. The mill had recently been refurnished completely, and contained three run of four foot buhrs, middlings mill and all other needed equipments. The many friends of Mr. Warren will deeply sympathize with him in this loss which will probably result in ending his career as a miller. We shall hope to see a prompt adjustment of the loss by the companies involved.

The beginning use of steam power gradually meant the death of the old water-powered mill.

Robert B. Warren lived on his farm surrounding the mill until 1891, when he moved with his family to Des Moines, Iowa, where he resided until the time of his death in 1906.



While living in Mahaska County, he was elected to the Iowa State Legislature in 1881, and served in the Nineteenth General Assembly. He was a member of the Pioneer Law Maker's Association at the time of his death.<sup>12</sup>



Robert B. Warren

## The Warren Bridge

It is believed that the first bridge to span the Skunk River by the Warren Mill was built in 1866. The Oskaloosa Herald in June 21, 1866, reports:

It will be a gratification to the citizens of this community, and the county generally to hear that a contract for building a bridge at this place (Warren's Mill) has been closed, with Messrs. Reichard of Knoxville, Marion Co., who have given bond to complete the structure by the 1st day of November, for the sum of \$3,500, one half paid on the signing of the contract and the other half on the completion of the work, one thousand of which was appropriated by the county and twenty five hundred raised by subscription.

The rock used in the building of the bridge and the stone grade was taken from the Peoria quarries.

This bridge and subsequent bridges, were known as the Warren Bridge(s). A new bridge was built following World War II in 1946 in a location a short distance upstream from the old bridge and the old mill site. At this time the new grade was put through the river bottom, making the river passable at all times, including large floods. This

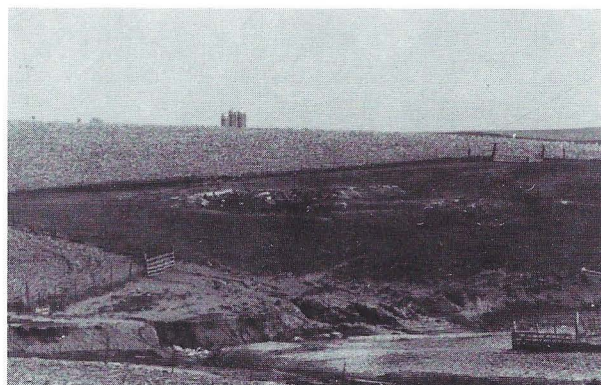
bridge served for forty-four years until it was replaced in 1990. It is now called the Highway 102 Bridge.

## Quarries

An industry once alive in the Peoria area was that of quarrying rock. Excellent quarries of stone were found about Peoria. The rock used for the Warren Bridge and grade was taken from the Peoria quarries. Early settlers used the stone to line their hand-dug wells. From the quarries in about 1856, came the stone to build the Jasper County Courthouse.<sup>13</sup>

Creighton, Kelly, McAnley, and Hess were all owners of quarries. Stone sold for \$1 a perch, which was eight feet long. A good quarry man was paid \$2 a day, equal to two perch.

The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald, Jan. 6, 1876, states, "A good quantity of building-stone abounds here (Peoria) plentifully. Specimens of it may be seen in the National Bank Building and probably others about Oskaloosa."



Abandoned quarry, Jacob Van Gorp farm.

## The Skunk River

The Skunk River crosses the northeast corner of Mahaska County. The Indiana name for it was Chicauqua by which it was also known by some of the old settlers. The term Chicauqua is said to signify anything of a strong odor and is supposed to have been applied to this stream on account of the great quantity of wild onions that grew about its head waters.<sup>14</sup>



## Peoria Soldiers in Civil War 33'd Infantry

1. Robert F. Burden, age 29, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in October 1, 1862 as First Lieutenant. Resigned April 8, 1863.
2. William Campbell, age 26, residence Peoria, born in Pennsylvania. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
3. James Crayton, age 29, residence Peoria, born in Pennsylvania. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
4. Charles F. Crowder, age 19, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
5. Thomas Crowder, age 32, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Discharged for disability March 7, 1863.
6. Robert W. B. Currey, age 28, resident of Peoria, born in Virginia. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Mustered out July 20, 1865.
7. David Clammer, age 32, residence Peoria, born in Maryland. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Discharged for promotion in 54th U.S. Colored Infantry July 26, 1863.
8. William Dodge, age 25, residency Peoria, born in New Hampshire. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Discharged for disability March 14, 1863.
9. Charles J. Dodd, age 22, residence Peoria, born in Illinois. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Discharged for disease January 23, 1863.
10. Lerno Fenn, age 33, residence Peoria, born in Connecticut. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Mustered out May 28, 1865.
11. Gary Fredrick, age 28, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Mustered out May 9, 1865.
12. Mortimer Jackson, age 18, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in February 8, 1864. Transferred July 12, 1865.
13. John George Kunzmann, age 25, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
14. Harvey G. McBride, age 26, residence Peoria, born in Illinois. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
15. William Osborn, age 18, residence Peoria, born in Iowa. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out May 22, 1865. Wounded twice.
16. Amos D. Petty, age 21, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
17. Jethro Rardin, age 29, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Dis-
- charged for disability October 17, 1863.
18. Jacob S. Ryan, age 18, residence Peoria, born in Virginia. Mustered in August 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
19. James T. Ridpath, age 36, residence Peoria, born in Virginia. Transferred out July 17, 1865.
20. James Robinson, age 19, residence Peoria, born in New York. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
21. James B. Scott, age 23, residence Peoria, born in Michigan. Mustered in October 4, 1862. Discharged for disability April 17, 1863.
22. James R. Spain, age 44, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Severely wounded. Mustered out July 8, 1865.
23. Henry Snake, age 26, residence Peoria, born in Pennsylvania. Discharged for disease October 24, 1863.
24. Albert Vancleve, age 18, residence Peoria, born in Iowa. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.
25. Samuel G. Van Cleve, age 21, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 10, 1865.
26. Robert Winn, age 18, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Mustered out July 17, 1865.

## Peoria Soldiers Who Died in the Civil War 33'd Infantry

1. James M. Berry, age 22, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in March 20, 1864. Died of disease September 11, 1864. Buried in National Cemetery, Little Rock, Arkansas.
2. Edward Currier, age 18, residence Peoria, born in Iowa. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Died of wounds August 8, 1863. Buried in Mississippi River National Cemetery, Memphis, Tennessee.
3. Jaab Fox, age 25, residence Peoria, born in Indiana. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Killed in action July 4, 1863, Helena, Arkansas.
4. Edward Graham, age 33, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Died May 5, 1864 at Princeton, Arkansas.
5. Marion D. Smith, age 30, residence Peoria, born in Ohio. Mustered in September 4, 1862. Died of disease August 7, 1863. Buried in Mississippi River National Cemetery, Memphis, Tennessee.

A thank you to Wylde (Jackson) Axmear for the above information.



## Paper clippings of interest

The following story takes place sometime during the 1850's:

### TOOK SCHOLTE'S CAB TO PEORIA CAMP MEETING

#### Chicken Dinner at Hotel Was An Exclusive Affair

(The following story was written by Ed. H. Voorhees, then of Garnett, Kansas and sent to the Oskaloosa Herald for publication. It was reprinted in the Old Pella Blade in the issue of April 2nd, 1901.)

Away back in the fifties I was a resident of the little hamlet of Pella. Word was brought to us that a huge Methodist camp meeting was in progress near Peoria, Mahaska county. Now if there was anything a young man had a hankering for it was a genuine old fashioned, double distilled, all wool and a yard wide, Methodist camp meeting. And so George A. Moser and myself secured the company of two of Pella's fairest daughters, Miss Meda Crisp and Miss Katie Woods. But to get a rig to go in was the question. There was no livery stable, and so far as I can recollect only one carriage in the city, and that was owned by Rev. H. P. Scholte. But to get it was the question. But by a good deal of persuasion and with P. H. Bousquet as a mediator, we succeeded and all hied away to the camp meeting grounds.

We crossed the classic Skunk at Warren's mills. As near as I can remember the camp ground was in a grove southeast of the town of Peoria. When we arrived the exercises were in full blast. After tethering our horses out to a couple of saplings we were unable to secure seats except in the "Bull Pen." With much gallantry and flourish we showed our girls to seats and took our places beside them. Just right there and then we "put our foot in it." For up rose some dignity in the preachers' stand and said: "Them two young chaps will get out of thar and go over thar and sit with the men." We got out and don't you forget it.

#### Usin' the Head

The sermon was loud, the singing louder and the shouting louder still, until at last it seemed to die out from sheer exhaustion. Then some man rose up (I think he was what they called an "extortioner") and announced that we would "now adjourn for two hours for dinner." Now we were in a fix. We had

brought nary a basket of grub, nor did we know a single soul on the ground of whom we could sponge a hind quarter of chicken or a piece of pumpkin pie.

Upon inquiry we found there was a hotel up in the city, so we wended our way thither. We hunted up the landlord, and asked him how it was about some dinner. "Wal" said he, "there is a heap of things around to eat if it was cooked. But the old woman got mad this morning and put off somewhere, and there is nobody to cook it." We told him we had a couple of cooks aboard and if he would allow it, would get dinner. "All right," he said, there are dressed chickens and pies and cakes, etc., in the cellar, so sail in," and they sailed. Two other couples came in by this time and the girls were induced to join in preparing dinner. How those four girls did make things hum and the young men acted as landlord, clerk, etc.

#### New Style

Before the meal was prepared the hotel was full of guests. We politely told them that dinner was really in the course of preparation and would be ready to serve in due time. We were very careful to keep the door locked. When dinner was ready the girls were to give a certain signal. I might add here that plates were laid for eight. When they gave us the signal we went around to a side door into the dining room and we eight took our seats. The landlord unlocked the door and announced dinner, but he said the tables were full and that he had "inaugurated a new style. The cooks and employees eat first." If I recollect correctly there was a kind of brimstone smell around there for a while. When we had finished we asked the landlord for our bill. He said, "Nary a red cent, for the joke is too good; and if you ever come this way again the freedom of the house is yours."

We spent the afternoon at the campground listening to preaching, the singing, warbling of the birds among the trees; and watching of the passing of the country boys and girls as they promenaded by, hand in hand. In the dusky eve we started homeward. As we drove across the beautiful prairies of proud Mahaska, we wondered if there was really any pleasure to a one-armed man driving home from a camp meeting in the beautiful moonlight with a handsome Iowa girl by his side. The Lord preserve us from such a misfortune.

E. H. Voorhees

The date and newspaper of the following clippings are not known.

### County News

#### RICHLAND

Mr. Cyrus Timbrel and wife start in a few days on a tour to the east, where they will remain for a short time.

Mrs. Evans who has been very sick is improving slowly.

Mr. Hull an old resident here, died last week and was buried in the Baldwin cemetery.

Rev. Weese preached at Garden Hall Sunday evening.

Quite a number attended the picnic Peoria last Saturday.

Miss Wright is visiting her sister, Mrs. Baldwin.

The Lunt School house will be finished in one more week, and when completed will be as good a house as there is in the county with all modern improvements. The painters are busy painting the building; Perry Swisher, who is doing the work, is a professional at the business. Mr. Sonneland who is doing the carpenter's and joiner's work is also skilled in his profession. The heavy burr oak frame timbers were shaped by Moses Wasson out of his own woods over thirty years ago, under a democratic administration, and we are rebuilding under a democratic administration.

The Fisk brothers moved into this township this week with their tile machine, and will put down a number of miles before they will be allowed to leave. The farmers of Richland are convinced that tile laid with the machine is far better than that put down by hand. It lays the tile as regularly and smooth as a board.

We think the county fair was a success this year. The showing of horses was fine. We congratulate ourselves on having the fastest horses in this corner that can be found in the county. With Young Midnight and Old Monarch we feel confident of what we say. We all admit that Champlaine is an elegant horse and very finely bred: a horse the county should be proud of. But when it comes to the pinch all have to admit that the northwest corner is where things can be made interesting.



## **RICHLAND**

There was quite a storm north of here last Sunday night, which did considerable damage, blowing down stacks of hay and grain.

G. M. Shelley returned from Kansas last week, where he had gone for a short stay. He starts back today where he intends to remain.

Tom Kitching starts today for Colorado on a pleasure trip. He has an uncle living there.

Wm. Berry, an old resident aged 71 years, was buried last Friday.

One of Mr. John Burke's children was buried at Peoria yesterday.

Wm. Lawrence buried a child last week.

Ben. Hull's father is not expected to live.

The basket festival at Garden Hall, last Thursday night was a grand success. Did not learn how much was made. Work has commenced on the new school house in Lunt district.

## **RICHLAND**

It is warm and pleasant again after so much cool rain weather.

L. T. Shangle is going to teach the fall and winter term of school in the Lunt district, O. L. McAuley having resigned his position as teacher.

Moses Wassom has a two-year old colt very badly hurt on a barb wire fence.

Mattie Lunt is on the sick list but is improving.

A number from here attended the state fair, among which were, Peter Apple and wife and daughter, Wesley Quinn, Bill and Harrison Dunwoody.

Henry Lunt is putting a new roof on his barn, preparing to plaster his house and fixing up things generally.

We are glad to hear that John Burke's baby is improving.

George Sheesley and wife and Mrs. Sophronia Baldwin leave to-morrow for Ohio.

Mrs. Susan Totten is in very poor health.

## **RICHLAND**

The weather is cool and pleasant. Now is the time to gather seed corn before frost comes.

Can any one tell the reason why, that when the Richland correspondent mails his letter at Peoria that it never gets there in time to be published in the Thursday's edition, and sometimes not at all? It is always put in the office before the mail leaves. We have a democratic postmaster. Why not let him have the position at once?

Mrs. Will Shaw and Amy Timbrel are visiting this week at the residence of Joe Shaw near Beacon. Will is keeping "bach."

Ike Evans and family have moved in with his father, who is in very poor health.

Quite a number of the young people met at Peter Apple's Thursday evening for the purpose of singing.

Mrs. Fletcher is reported quite sick. John Beal has bought the Hiram Davis farm.

Gould Herr's mother is visiting him this week.

## **Oskaloosa Weekly Herald, Aug. 16, 1891**

The mayor of Peoria disgraced the town and place by drunkenness and was forced to resign.

## **RICHLAND**

Mr. Wasson and Mr. Hess are through threshing. The machine will now move to Mr. Lunt's. Wheat and oats are turning out good.

Mr. G. M. Shelly will start in a few days for Kansas, where he will remain a couple of weeks.

Mr. Jackson of New Sharon is visiting her daughter, Mrs. Swisher.

Mrs. Watts of near Newton was guest of Miss Laura Wasson last week.

Mr. H. W. Lunt is having his water pump neatly painted.

Little Wilber Swisher who has been quick sick is better now.

There will be several democrats in attendance at the convention in Oskaloosa, Thursday, 13th.

Rev. Weese preached at Peoria Sunday.

## **OSKALOOSA HERALD JULY 17, 1873**

### **THE FOURTH AT PEORIA**

EDS HERALD — Among the pleasant gatherings of the glorious fourth was the one held near Peoria. Not relishing so long a ride through the heat as was necessary to participate in the celebration at Oskaloosa and Sharon, a number of the people determined to have a real good old fashioned time on that day. In the morning a goodly number gathered in a grove nearby and listened to music, speaking, etc. etc. Rev. McCaatoock addressed the audience in a way that will not be soon forgotten. He is a splendid speaker. After these exercises they were called to a most beautiful repast. Some of the neighbors went out fishing on the third, and in a catch of about 200 pounds of fish, they had about 20 pike, which were served in No. 1 style, at this fourth of July dinner. Cakes, pies and 'sich' were abundantly furnished, ice cream plenty and lemonade *quantum sufficit* for all who were athirst. Altogether we had a jolly good time. Got home before the storm, and hope on next fourth to celebrate again and will be glad to see

you and have you partake of a dinner such as only the ladies of Peoria and neighbors can prepare. I hope you will excuse my tardiness in thus long delaying this account.

FOURTH OF JULY  
Peoria, July 13, 1873

## **RICHLAND TOWNSHIP**

**Its location—towns—streams—general topography—people—crops—improvements,—etc.,—etc.**

This township is situated in the extreme northwest corner of the county, and is without doubt one of the excellent townships of the *par excellence* county of Mahaska. If one would have his ideas of the county enlarged and liberalized, let him ride out for a day or two, through Richland for instance. The citizens of this township think they have the township of the county, and they are nearly right, but there are others equally as good. Richland is the proud possessor of two towns—Peoria and Granville.

## **PEORIA**

Is situated about two and a half miles west of the east line of the township, and two and three-quarter north of the south line. The town has two stores, kept, one by McCarter & McBride, the former of whom is also P.M., J.P., and a true Republican. Pierson Spain keeps the other store. The M.E. denomination have a very fine church building, new, 40x60, well finished and presenting an appearance that would do honor to Oskaloosa; not beneath it in appearance, and but little in size, is the "Christian Chapel," also new, 40x50; a smaller building is owned and occupied by the Methodists. Peoria has a population of about 125, among whom are the usual number of blacksmiths, carpenters, etc., and a fair number of chair bottomers. A railroad running through this little village would so materially aid it that it would soon outgrow the present boundaries. We trust there is a bright future in store for it.

## **GRANVILLE**

In the northeast corner of the township, about three-fourths of a mile from the north and east lines, is situated in, and surrounded by a beautiful tract of country. It is a little larger than Peoria, having about 150 inhabitants; has two stores, kept by G.W. Follet, and S.S. Needham, (by the way, they say that Needham, besides being a first rate store-keeper, is a good fisherman,—goes often and has splendid luck). These stores are well kept, and supply the wants of the surrounding community as near Oskaloosa prices as is possible—in fact, I saw sugar sell in Granville as cheap as anywhere in Oskaloosa, the grange store not excepted. Granville has one church, M.E., 40x60, Rev. McClintock preaches



for them, also at Peoria, and everywhere I heard him spoken of in the highest terms. He is evidently a power for good among the people in his circuit. The school interests of the town are not uncared for, as a large two story school building testifies. The following gentlemen comprise the officers and board of directors of the Independent District of Granville: Chas. Phelps, president; H. P. Kitching, secretary; J.H. Berry, treasurer; Henry Shoyer, S. W. Clevinger, Sylvester Baldwin, and Thomas Grunden, directors.

#### STREAMS

Richland is well supplied with streams, which are benefits not as highly appreciated as they should be. The Skunk river crosses the township from northwest to southeast through the southwest corner; emptying into this there are creeks large and small, most of them running from north to south, thus affording drainage facilities almost unsurpassed in the county. Elk, and Buckley are the largest of the creeks. These various streams not only afford drainage, but along their banks grows excellent timber, which adds very materially to the value of the adjoining farming lands.

#### TOPOGRAPHY

The general lay of the land through the township is rolling, in some places almost to brokenness, especially close upon the river and larger creeks, yet there are tracts high and level, and beautiful to look upon, especially when covered with luxuriant crops. Good timber is abundant and so located that no part of the township is far away from it. The largest prairie tracts are in the northeast corner of the township. The soil is good, in some parts equal to the best in the county; in others, especially on the points of the hills in the broken districts there is a clay admixture; but I am told that one year with the other, this soil produces as good crops as the more black and richer soil of the prairie; although not quite prepared to endorse it, I hope it is all correct. An abundance of stones of the best quality is found in the township, and several quarries are in operation. At Peoria, in James Crayton's quarry, I saw some splendid stone. They were getting it out for the court house now building at Newton, county seat of Jasper county, and some twenty miles distant.

#### MILLS

Robt. B. Warren has a first-rate mill on the Skunk river, and has a good patronage. His work, like himself, is well spoken of wherever known. Chas. Johnson has a stream grist and saw mill. Much of the lumber used for fences and the construction of many of the farm buildings is made at this mill.

#### IMPROVEMENTS

At this time of the year one does not expect to find many improvements in actual construction, yet Richland has a fair record in this respect. I found Jno. Lundy building a house 18x28; an L addition to house by Jno. Hoodberry; a new barn 34x40 by Abraham Miller, cost \$1200; a new house by Jno. Widows. To the above should be added the two new churches at Peoria, a fine new brick house at the same place, (owner's name not learned) and some twelve or fifteen large barns put up in the last two years. If it should be my fortune to visit this township five years hence, I shall expect to see wonderful changes in the growth of the country and the number of fine buildings, for the

#### PEOPLE

of Richland township are progressive and up to the spirit of the times—even the Holland part of the population found in the western part of the township, are such only as add to the general wealth of the community in which they are found. They are Americanized in most things but their cooking, which is—well, don't ask me; (I took dinner with one of 'em.)

#### SCHOOLS

The schools are ten in number, with suitable houses, and taught by well qualified teachers. The school at Peoria, under charge of Jno. Davis, graded department, and Miss Emma McAnley, primary, closed on Friday last, and the exercises were of such a character as to impress upon the mind of the visitor the fact that both teachers were fully competent for their duties and had not failed to perform them. The primary, under Miss McAuley's training exhibited a degree of advancement and thoroughness seldom found in the primary departments of any locality. The township board are: J. L. Gottfelter, president; R. S. Fleming, secretary; Peter Apple, treasurer; Wm. L. Aiken, R. B. Warren, Jno. Forker, Wm. Godby and James Noel.

#### CROPS

Never have I seen in Mahaska county more favorable indications of abundant crops of all kinds. The hot weather of June hurried up the tardy corn, and it is now going far ahead of the most sanguine expectations. Wheat, oats and grass are promising remarkable yields. The small grains were somewhat tangled by the recent storms but generally stand up well. Rye harvest is over, and the wheat will be commenced before this issue of the HERALD is read. A few days of clear weather would facilitate the safe harvest of a large crop.

#### PERSONAL

Among the many acquaintances made during my stay in Richland, I will mention a few: On Thursday night I was entertained by Hon. J. N. H. Campbell, who formerly represented the county in the legislature. Mr. C. is a gentleman of

culture, a most hospitable host, but alas! for his discernment and judgment, he has affiliated with the political part of the grange, and believes that reform is only to be sought at their hands. He has a beautiful farm of 240 acres, near where the second Nasby keeps his "X rides post officis." James Campbell, one of the good farmers of the township, and a reader of the HERALD for the last twenty years, lives near the post office. I spent a few moments in pleasant chat with him, and then called upon Philip Appel, a man who has "honesty" written in unmistakable characters upon his face. Mr. A. came to Richland during the war, almost penniless, and by sober industry and careful economy now finds himself the owner of a fine 80 acre farm, with the necessary amount of stock and fixtures for its successful working. As he related to me his experiences and successes, I could but turn my thoughts to other branches of business or industry, and wonder what other trade, profession or business would do as much for a man, and give such returns for the money invested. How many merchants would like to begin business with a capital like his—\$50,000, and hope to achieve such results? Just to the west of Philip, lives his brother Peter Appel, who has a well-kept farm of 120 acres. My next call was upon James McAuley, whom I found to be a social entertainer. He "feared I was a candidate and wanted to electioneer him;" but learning the object of my visit, his face relaxed and his invitation to "stay to dinner" was as cordial as imperative. And such a dinner, it was jolly—if you happen in that neighborhood and want a No. 1 meal, stop at Mc's. West of here a mile or so lives Charley Shields, a jolly good boy, who is the owner of 165 acres of farm, upon which stands a good house and a splendid barn. Charley and his neighbor James Engle, are of anti-grange proclivities, preferring to bide the ills they now endure than flee to others they know not of. On Friday, the setting sun found me away up in the northeast corner of the township, where I remained as the guest of Chas Phelps, a gentleman whom to know is a pleasure—not only as a friend and a brother, but as a man of good sound principles, and a true Republican. On my return I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. J. F. Smith, of Granville. The doctor keeps himself well posted on all current topics of the day, and after a chat with him, you can but feel that the time was well employed, and as he advances his opinions you will feel (unless a granger) that his mind is a hard, rich nugget of innate good sense. Others there are whom I met and would be glad to meet again, but lest this become wearisome I will drop 'personals' until my next visit to Richland, when with the acquaintances already made I shall be able to do more justice to the people of that excellent township.

GEO. R. LEE



**OSKALOOSA HERALD**  
**JULY 9, 1874**

**RICHLAND TP. ITEMS**

PEORIA, JULY 6, 1874

EDS. HERALD—We are having very dry and warm weather. . . Wm. Lawrence left his home and family to go to Kansas on business. While there, he was taken sick with inflammation of the bowels and died in three days. Mr. Lawrence was an old citizen; came from New York at an early day a poor man. It is supposed his estate is worth \$30,000. . . This community had a good time on the 4th. They met in a grove near here. Our invited speaker did not come. The procession was about half a mile long. . . Our friend, C. B. Shields is building a fine residence. . . Our county superintendent was around last week. I hear him spoken of highly. By the way, outside of our county, he is said to rank high as an educator and school man generally.

A GRANGER.

DEATH OF AN OLD CITIZEN—On Sunday, June 21, WILLIAM LAWRENCE of Richland township, one of the early settlers of

Mahaska county, died in Howard county, Kansas, at the residence of Henry O. Lyster, formerly of this place. Mr. Lawrence went to Kansas about four weeks ago to visit a daughter whose husband had died but a short time before, intending after setting up the business, to bring her back with him. He had been there but a few days when he was taken ill, and after an illness of three days, died. A message was sent to Mrs. Lawrence, when he became dangerous, but he was 60 miles from a station, and he was dead and buried before the despatch reached his wife, though not knowing it she at once started down. Mr. Lawrence was one of our best citizens, highly respected and universally loved by all who knew him, and so long a resident of the county that his loss will long be felt. He it was who named the township he lived in. When the commissioners met for the purpose of naming the township, he was present and from the rich quality of the land thereabouts, suggested the name of "Richland," which was adopted.

**OSKALOOSA WEEKLY HERALD**  
**AUG. 16, 1891**

The mayor of Peoria disgraced the town and place by drunkenness and was forced to resign.

**RICHLAND**

Mr. Wasson and Mr. Hess are through threshing. The machine will now move to Mr. Lund's. Wheat and oats are turning out good.

Mr. G. M. Shelly will start in a few days for Kansas, where he will remain a couple of weeks.

Mr. Jackson of New Sharon is visiting her daughter, Mrs. Swisher.

Mrs. Watts of near Newton was guest of Miss Laura Wasson last week.

Mr. H. W. Lunt is having his water pump neatly painted.

Little Wilber Swisher who has been quite sick is better now.

There will be several democrats in attendance at the convention in Oskaloosa, Thursday, 13th.

Rev. Weese preached at Peoria Sunday.

**Death Notices**

The "Letter Etched in Black" was used by the family to announce the death of a loved one or friend. A vivid description of former customs for burial can be found in the Sully, Iowa, Centennial book, 1882-1882, p. 48.

**FUNERAL NOTICE**

**DIED:**—At his residence 5 miles north of Blandinsville, Monday June 19th. 1882, at 5 p. m.

**JOHN T. DUNCAN.**

Aged 40 years.

The funeral will take place at the old Liberty Cemetery, one mile north of Blandinsville this Tuesday June 20, at 2 o'clock p. m., Elder Walden officiating. Friends and acquaintances invited.

Blandinsville, June 20, 1882



Raritan Box  
 Henderson Box  
 April 13<sup>th</sup> 91

My dear Uncle Aunt

With great regret  
 I tell you of the death  
 of my Mother, who  
 died ~~quite~~ last Wednesday  
 day night, about  
 half past eight, she  
 had been sick for  
 some time with the  
 la grippe, but was  
 getting better, when  
 she had a relapse & die

quite suddenly  
 We buried her  
 at Liberty grave &  
 near Plainville  
 last Friday, the funeral  
 was preached at  
 house

With love to all  
 I remain  
 Your affectionate son  
 Caroline Ewing



# Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Virgil J. Vogel, Iowa Place Names of Indian Origin, (Iowa City, Iowa, University of Iowa Press, 1983), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Vogel, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>Wylde (Jackson) Axmear, personal interview.

<sup>4</sup>Zita M. Lindell, correspondence.

<sup>5</sup>Census of Iowa 1836-1880, p. 536.

<sup>6</sup>Portrait and Biographical Album of Mahaska Co. (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1887).

<sup>7</sup>Wylde (Jackson) Axmear, personal interview.

<sup>8</sup>Semira A. Phillips, History of Mahaska Co. (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1931), pp. 376-377.

<sup>9</sup>Phillips, p. 377.

<sup>10</sup>Phillips, p. 547.

<sup>11</sup>Phillips, p. 719

<sup>12</sup>Cyrenus Cole, Souvenir History of Pella, Iowa, 1847 - 1922 (Pella, Iowa, The Booster Press, G.S. Stout, Publisher, 1922), pp. 20-24.

<sup>13</sup>Manoah Hedge, Past and Present of Mahaska Co. 1906, p. 83.

<sup>14</sup>Wm. M. Donnel, Pioneers of Marion County (Des Moines: Republican Steam Printing House, 1872), p. 8.



## Chapter IV

# Businesses and Organizations



The McAuley Store which housed the Post Office.

### Peoria (Warrensville) Post Office<sup>1</sup> (1849-1906)

The postal records in the National Archives show that the post office at Peoria, Iowa, was established on August 16, 1849, as Warrensville with Elbert S. Warren appointed Postmaster. The name was changed to Peoria on November 15, 1854. The post office was discontinued on November 15, 1906. (Its mail was sent to Pella.)

As best as can be determined the post office was located in the store on the north side of Main Street. (McAuley Store) It was located in the main part of the building on the east side of the aisle. The mail came from Pella two times per week. People walked in and rode horseback to get their mail. A man who was able to read would often read the Oskaloosa paper audibly at a certain time of the day and people would gather to listen and sit on the porch and visit.<sup>2</sup>

The following is a list of the Postmasters and

the dates which they were appointed.

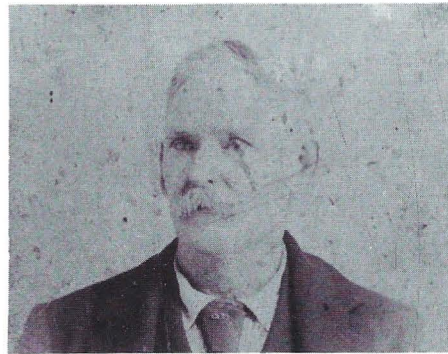
Elbert S. Warren	16 Aug. 1849
	(established as Warrensville)
James L. Warren (Rev. Dr.)	30 June 1851
James L. Warren	15 Nov. 1854
	(changed to Peoria)
Wm. E. Beall	8 Dec. 1857
James McAuley	7 Feb. 1859
Harvey McCaslin	30 Nov. 1859
Amos Bartlett	23 June 1860
B. S. Wintermute	11 June 1861
Leroy M. Gary	11 Jan. 1866
Miss Millie Gary	8 Mar. 1867
Joseph McCarter	5 Jan. 1869
A. S. Tryson	29 Apr. 1870
Joseph McCarter	9 Dec. 1872
Albert S. Smith	29 July 1880
	(money orders authorized)
Henry Coomes	16 Dec. 1885
Wm. N. Hunt	27 July 1889
Wm. P. Harris	5 Aug. 1893



Envelope dated 1885, Peoria postmark, note 1¢ postage.



Wm. M. Sheesley	14 Nov. 1894
Sylvester L. Spain	24 July 1897
W. N. Hunt	25 Oct. 1901
	(declined)
John S. Wharton	14 Nov. 1901
Marshall S. Allen	6 Oct. 1903
Johannes Thomassen	21 June 1905
mail goes to Pella notice	14 Dec. 1905
	(date of discontinuance)
effective	15 Jan. 1906



Nate Hunt - Post Master, 1891.



Peoria, Iowa, 1871. W Sh - Wagon Shop, BS Sh - Blacksmith Shop, H Sh - Harness Shop.  
Courtesy of Loyde Kiser.



B, A 22-77.17  
No. 30.)

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

CONTRACT OFFICE,

WASHINGTON, *July 27<sup>th</sup>*, 1865.

SIR:

To enable the Topographer of this Department to determine, with as much accuracy as possible, the relative positions of Post Offices, so that they may be correctly delineated on its maps, the Postmaster General requests you to fill up the spaces and answer the questions below, and return the same, verified by your signature and dated, under cover to this office.

Respectfully, &c., &c.,

*C. S. Childs*

ACTING SECOND ASS'T. P.M. GEN'L

~~Second Assistant Postmaster General.~~

To POSTMASTER AT

*Peoria,*

*Mahaaska Co. Iowa*

The (P. O. Dept) name of my office is

*Peoria*

\* Its local name is

It is situated in the

*NEast*

quarter of Section No. *22*, in Township

*Seventh* (north ~~or south~~.) Range *Twentieth* (east or west,) County  
of *Mahaaska*, State of *Iowa*

The name of the most prominent river near it is

*Smiths Run*

The name of the nearest creek is

*Blue*

This office is *two* miles from said river, on the *North* side of it, and is *one*  
miles from said nearest creek on the *East* side of it.

The name of the nearest office on route No.

is

*Granville*

and its

distance is *3* miles, by the traveled road, in a *North East* direction from this my office.

The name of the nearest office on the same route on the other side is

*Hint*

and its distance is *3 1/2* miles in a *South East* direction from this my office.

The name of the nearest office off the route is

*Peller*

and its

distance by the most direct road is *8* miles in a *South West* direction from this my office.

State, under this, the names of all other offices near your office, in different directions from it, and their distances from it by the most direct roads.

*Oskalesia 18 miles South East*

*Newton 25 N West*

\* If the town, village, or site of the Post Office, be known by another name than that of the Post Office, state that other name here, that it may be identified on the map of the State (or Territory.)

☒ A diagram of the township and sections, (or, where the land is not so divided, a sketch map,) showing the precise location of your office, together with the adjoining Post Offices, towns or villages, the roads, railroads, and larger streams or creeks, in addition to the above, will be useful, and is desired. (See diagram blank accompanying this, to be filled up.)

(Signature of Postmaster.)

*B. S. Wintersmiller*

(Date.)

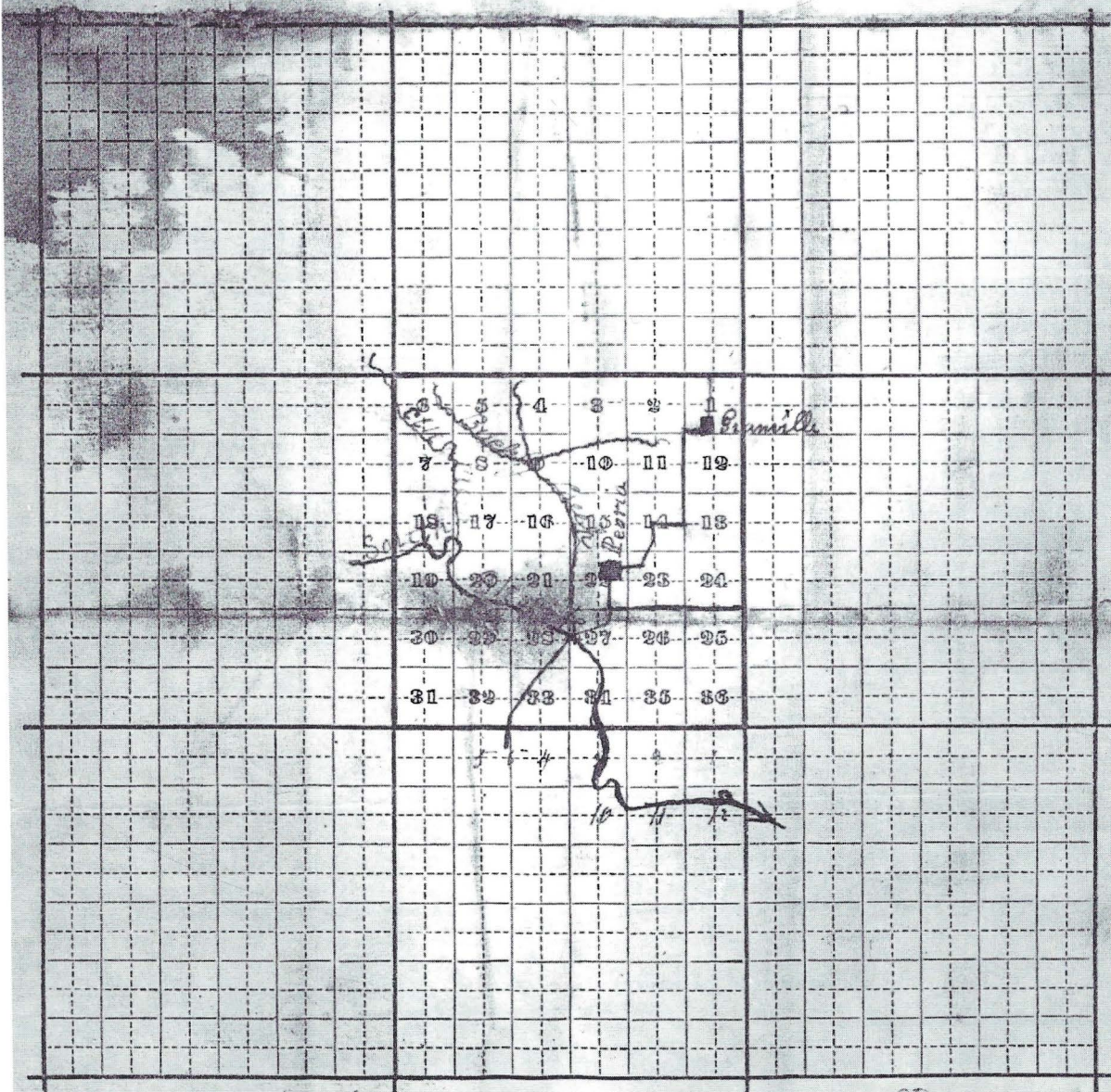
*Aug 30 1865*



Diagram showing the site of the Peoria Post Office  
in Township 77 Range 17 of Principal  
Meridian, County of Mahaska, State  
of Iowa, with the adjacent Townships and Post  
Offices.

It is requested that the exact site of the proposed, or existing  
Post Office, as also the roads to the adjoining offices, and the larger  
streams or rivers, be marked on this diagram, to be returned as soon  
as possible to the Post Office Department.

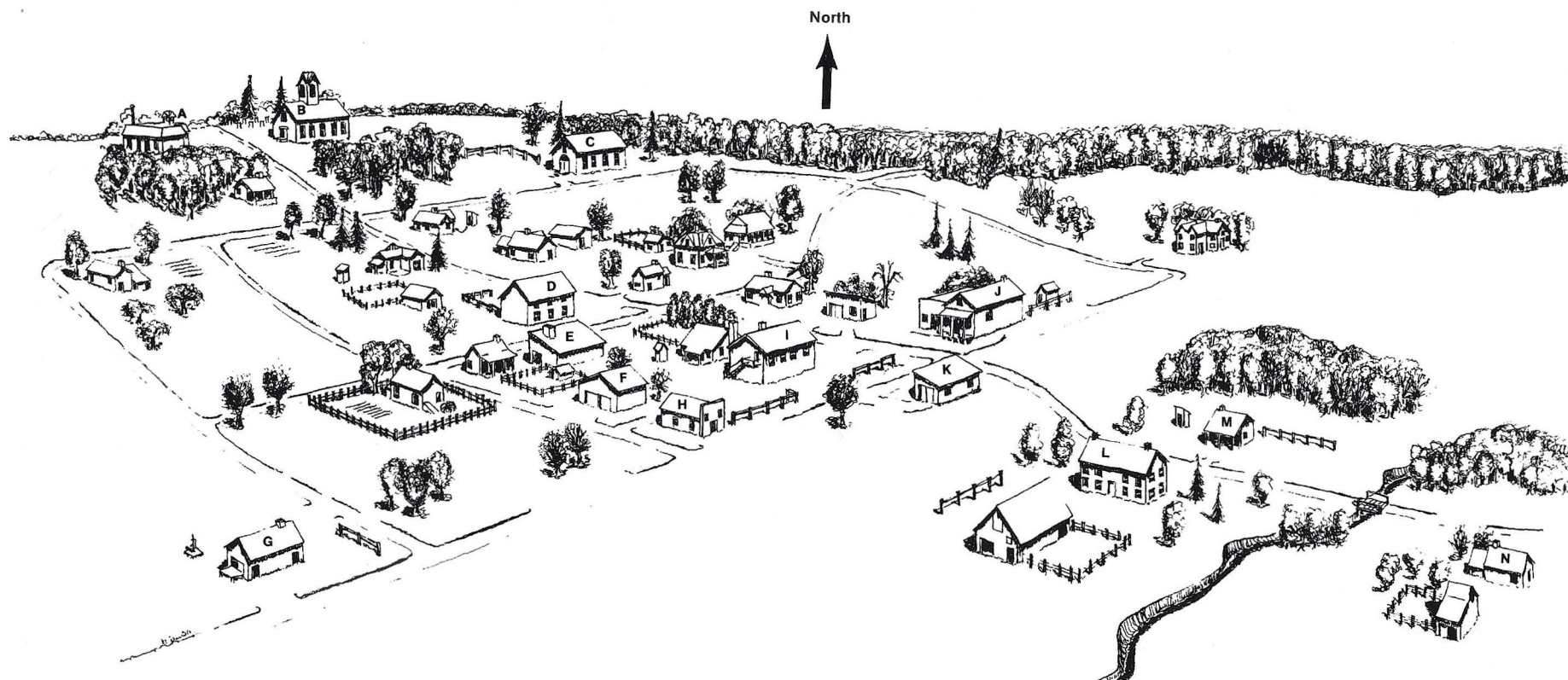
(NORTH.)



Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to the mile.

(SOUTH.)





Bird's Eye View of Peoria, Iowa, 1871

- Key:
- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| A. Public School                              | H. Store                   |
| B. M.E. (Methodist) Church                    | I. Store and Masonic Lodge |
| C. Christian Church (may have faced the east) | J. Store and Post Office   |
| D. Township Hall                              | K. Blacksmith Shop         |
| E. Wagon Shop                                 | L. Hotel (Peoria House)    |
| F. Blacksmith Shop                            | M. Tavern                  |
| G. Creamery                                   | N. Dr. Woodworth's Home    |





The Peoria House (Peoria Hotel). Drawing by Harvey Blom.

### Peoria House (Peoria Hotel)

The Peoria Hotel was located on the south side of Main Street directly east of where the Peoria store is now located. It was in existence as early as the 1850's, according to the newspaper article, "Took Scholte's Cab to Peoria Camp Meeting" printed in Chapter III. The 1871 Peoria map locates the Peoria House in this location and names Mrs. M. A. Crayton (also spelled Creighton), as proprietor. The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald, Jan. 6, 1876, lists, "one hotel 'Peoria House', proprietor C. C. Joy."

It has been determined that the Hotel building was moved in the late 1800's to what was later the Henry Nibbelink place. It served as a residence there until 1954 at which time it was torn down and replaced with the home Jonathan Nibbelink now lives in.

### Blacksmith Shop

The blacksmith shop was as important to the early settler as the grist mill or the harness shop. Blacksmith shops were located not only in the towns and villages but also in the country. The shoeing of horses was done in the winter while sharpening plow shares was a summer job.

John Glottenfelter is reported to have been the first blacksmith.

The blacksmith in 1875, is listed as John H. Duncan.<sup>3</sup>

The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald of Jan. 6, 1876, states, "Peoria has two blacksmith shops. The principal one is carried on by J. G. Glottenfelder."

The Oskaloosa Herald of July 22, 1879, states, "J. S. Wharton and Sons erected a blacksmith shop here this spring and is run by W. C. and W. T. Wharton. Sam Hewitt also runs a shop and does considerable business."

It is believed that the Hewitt blacksmith shop mentioned above was located where now stands the Peoria Store. Will Lindley states of this shop, "It was owned by McCamel and afterwards by Sam Hewitt."<sup>4</sup> It is known that S. S. Hewitt was a Peoria blacksmith in 1878.<sup>5</sup> Hewitt had a son Clayton (Clate) whom he trained in the trade but Clayton moved to Oskaloosa and later ran a shop in Rose Hill.\*

The Wharton blacksmith shop is believed to be the one located west across the street from the Hewitt Shop (west of the Peoria Store). This is the blacksmith shop which Eliza Samen took over in about 1910.

The Samen shop is one that many old timers of today can remember. Its entrance was from the north. Samen, a Hollander, was also an accordeon player. He was known to be hard working, hiring two extra men in the winter to help with the shoeing of horses.



Eliza Samen in front of his first Blacksmith Shop, 1910-1918.

After a few years, Samen relocated and built his shop north of the present Bob Deur residence on the east side of the street. He lived south of his shop in the home later owned by Coen Stuursma.

Samen died July 24, 1918, presumably of a heart attack at a relatively early age.

Tabbe Vander Veen bought Samen's shop in 1920 and worked there as a blacksmith. In about 1927, the Town Hall building was moved to its new location on the cemetery hill. Tabbe built the large blacksmith shop in its place, which still



stands. Tabe was well known not only as a blacksmith but also as a self educated musician; he played the church organ and organized and directed the Peoria Male Chorus for many years.

Tabé worked in his shop until his death in 1950.

\*Clate Hewitt was the father-in-law of Fred Kool.



Jake Dunwoody bringing cow home in evening. Tabe's blacksmith shop in background.

### Harness Shop

The harness shop was in existence as early as 1878, if not much before. Phillips writes, "A hotel is kept by C. C. Joy, who is also proprietor of a harness shop."<sup>6</sup>

Will Lindley in his sketch of Peoria given about 1936 or after at an old settlers' reunion states, "Before I forget it, I will state that in the west part of the store, on the north side of the street was a harness shop owned and operated by Christopher (C. C.) Joy, better known as "Chris", who sold or traded out and moved to Nebraska in 1881, or 1882.

The only other history recorded of the harness shop is July 22, 1897. The Oskaloosa Herald, July 22, 1897, "W. P. (Bill) Harris has a good harness shop and is a first class workman. He also runs a feed mill and is kept busy with that a good part of the time. He has a gasoline engine to furnish the power."

### Peoria Creamery

Little is known about the Peoria Creamery. It was located on the property where John Pothoven built his home. It is said that a good well existed on the same lot which provided ample water for the business.

In 1904, the old defunct Peoria Creamery was sold. One half was purchased by the Peoria Christian Reformed Church and used as a Consistory Room. The other half went to Godert Vander Hart.<sup>7</sup>

### Saloon

Little is known of the Peoria Saloon. Its location is believed to be on the north side of Main Street, across from the Hotel. The account of the Peoria Riot of 1863 tells of the men indulging in some of the town beer.

### Cooperage

References are made to a cooperage. A cooper was one who made or repaired vessels formed of staves and hoops, as casks, barrels, tubs, etc. The Oskaloosa Herald, Jan. 6, 1876, gives reference to, "one cooper shop in Peoria owned by J. Spain." It has been said that this was located south of the Junior Deur home in the area where Cornelius Spoelstra once lived.

### Washing Machine Factory

No information is available other than that found in a clipping, "A washing machine factory was located in Peoria at one time. The machine was rectangular at the top, made of wood, and had a corrugated zinc lining in the barrel shaped bottom."

### Shoe Repair Shop

Bill Shoebring (Shubring) was a grocery man in the store below the Masonic Hall. During the winter months Mortimer Jackson had a place in the store where he mended shoes. Jackson was the grandfather of Wylde (Jackson) Axmear.

### Saw Mill

The nearest saw mill was located just south of the Hickory Grove School. It blew up in 1901 killing Dudley Boyd, James Schippers, and Frank Meyers.

Carter's saw mill was located in Lower Grove, south of where Lilburn Jansen now lives, on the east side of the road.

References are also made to a sawmill owned by John Allen.



## Wagon Shops

Oskaloosa Weekly Herald, Jan. 6, 1876, lists two wagon shops run by Hunt and Shewe. Phillips in 1878, states that A. Hunt was a wagon maker in Peoria. He also had a large apiary (a place where bees are kept). Hunt's wagon shop was located where Jake Dunwoody later lived. Hunt came to this county in 1852.

## Cabinet and Coffin Maker

Martin Shene was the cabinet maker who made many coffins for burial in the community.<sup>8</sup> Phillips states that in 1876, he was also a farmer. Perry Kitching was also known to be a cabinet maker and a coffin maker.

## The Peoria Cornet Band (Will Sheesley's Orchestra)

It is assumed that the Peoria Cornet Band was in existence from about 1880 - 1900. Of this group Will Lindley wrote,<sup>9</sup>

An organization that any community could have been proud of was the Peoria band. The membership at the time I first knew it were William and John Sheesley, who were the nucleus of the band. Others were C. E. Johnson and son Will, Sylvester Spain, Tom and Jim Van Cleave, Jake Timbrel, Lou and Charlie Berry, Tom Kitching, and William McCarter. William Johnson is the only one living unless Charles Berry is still alive.

Mrs. Tom Gosnell (Rose Jackson) mentioned the band when writing a paper for the 1952 old settlers reunion. When referring to the Fourth of July celebration she wrote, "The Peoria Band was always there to play. It was called the Peoria Cornet Band and when it traveled many people thought it came from Peoria, Illinois. The band was composed of a number of people from Peoria and surrounding country. Jim Engle, as a member of the band, told of a time when the Peoria Band went to Waterloo to play when a presidential candidate spoke. Seeing the drum marked "Peoria Cornet Band" one of the Waterloo bandmen was heard to remark, "Well, they are not so much better than we are even if they do come from a big town!"

The Oskaloosa Weekly Herald, June 7, 1894, stated, "Memorial exercises here were grand, and a large crowd listened to G. W. Lafferty, who

delivered the address. Our choir and Will Sheesley's Orchestra furnished the music."

## Peoria's "Water System"

When it was built or who built it is not known, but stories of a gravity system were often told. It may have been in existence near the turn of the century.

The source of the water was the spring by the creek east of the Peoria Store. It is said the water was pumped into an underground brick reservoir on the hill, east of the Public School on the south side of the street.

J. B. Dahm, while grading the new road in Peoria in 1963, ran into the one inch water pipe as they lowered the hill in front of the Jacob Vander Molen residence.

If the system functioned or how long it functioned is not known.

## Country Club (Community Club)<sup>10</sup>

The Country Club was organized in August, 1907. It consisted of a group of women who met once each month in the members' homes.

### Country Social Club

At the pleasant home of Mr. and Mrs. Tell Werhle near Peoria, the country social club met on Friday evening. In order to get the crowd acquainted and also to cause plenty of amusement some guest scattered amongst book paper, on the piano or any place suitable for a hiding place, some cards equal in number to the guests present. They were then bidden to search for them until each member had found one, upon which were written things for them to do. Then Mrs. Kitty Lunt, the president, called them together and asked each in turn to do as their card bid them, which created different amusement for quite a time. Then the crowd was treated to some fine music by Miss Cuba Griggs of New Sharon. Then quite a few of the little ladies gave us some fine recitations which always pleases old and young to hear the children declaim. In the meantime Mrs. Werhle was busy in the kitchen and she soon invited us all out to the dining room where two large tables were spread and she with the assistance of club members served a very dainty and appetizing lunch which all enjoyed. Then we were treated to some nice vocal and instrumental music and social conversation until the good old clock on the mantle began striking late hours making us hustle to get home and to dream land, wishing it would be our good fortune to be invited to this pleasant home again soon.





The Country Club, organized 1907. Left to right: Mary Straughn (Mrs. John), Kittie Quire (wife of Dr. Frank Quire), Laura Wehrle (Mrs. W.T. Wehrle), Nellie Hull (or Mary, Mrs. Teen), Mrs. McVay, Louise Ayres (Dr. Ayres' wife), Cora Lunt (Walter, daughter of Dr. Woodworth), Hattie Johnson (Bill), Retha Osmond (Austin), Zella Wehrle (Warner), Ida Smith (Mrs. George, ran the Taintor Store), Kitty Lunt (Johnson), Lou Timbrel (Perry), Clara Shangle (Mrs. Lew).

#### COUNTRY CLUB EVENT

On February 14th, 1916, several special entertainments were given in the neighborhood in honor of St. Valentine Day, but none were better entertained or had a more social time than the Country Club which met at the pleasant home of Mr. and Mrs. Tell Wehrle. The hearty welcome given the guests upon arriving made them all feel at home. Then the house was beautifully decorated in hearts and other decorations appropriate for Valentine and all of the entertainment was of the "heartty" kind.

The following program was rendered:

Mrs. Mary Straughan, "A Husband's Decision."

Mrs. Will Johnson, "History of St. Valentine."

John Wehrle, "A Lost Child."

Mrs. Zella Wehrle, "A Sweetheart."

Mrs. Retha Osmond, "Valentine Day Song."

Mrs. John Wehrle, "Once When We Bought Valentines."

Mrs. Perry Timbrell, "Valentine or Valentines."

J. W. Straughan, "How to Keep Young."

After the program several very interesting and amusing contests were enjoyed. The prize winners were: Mrs.

Mame Lidtke, Tell Wehrle, Mrs. Perry Timbrell and Dick Fleming. Then came the fishing for partners for supper. Fishing appeared to be good and soon each one secured a partner and journeyed to the dining room where fresh oysters, cake and coffee were served in abundance. Mrs. Mame Lidtka and two sons of Grinnell, Mrs. Liza Wehrle and Mr. and Mrs. Dick Fleming and three sons were visitors present. At a late hour all departed for their separate homes with "hearts" warmed with the good cheer and jollity of the occasion and another club meeting passed into history.

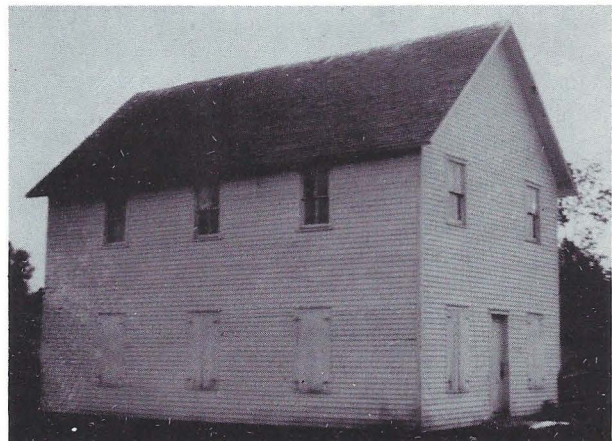
#### The Town Hall

Most old timers will remember the old Town Hall which stood on the hill by the cemetery, north side of the street, where the new Town Hall building now stands.

The old Town Hall did not always stand here. Its original location was the corner where the blacksmith shop stands today. In 1927 the building was moved. The hill was steep so the move was made first north a few blocks, then west and south to the new location.

Mrs. Tom Gosnell (Rose Jackson) when preparing for the Peoria old settlers reunion in 1952 wrote,

There was one place all the townspeople went together, young and old and regardless of the weather. This was the City Hall where fun was in store for one and all. The reason why it gained so much fame was from all the meetings held there by different names. Ice cream



Peoria Town Hall, 1927, before it was moved.

socials, oyster suppers, lodge affairs, ladies aid, home talent shows and good school exhibitions. What more could we ask? Ah yes in that hall we had "Punch and Judy" shows and Medicine men galore.





Wanda Allen going to school. Town Hall in the background.

On election day all voted at that Hall. Then the Republicans and Democrats came and went scratching their tickets to their hearts content. The Odd Fellows and Rebekahs lodge hall was also in this Hall upstairs.

During W.W. I the Red Cross ladies met in the upstairs of this Hall and made bandages and sewed for the "war effort."

In 1936 the Hall was wired for electricity.

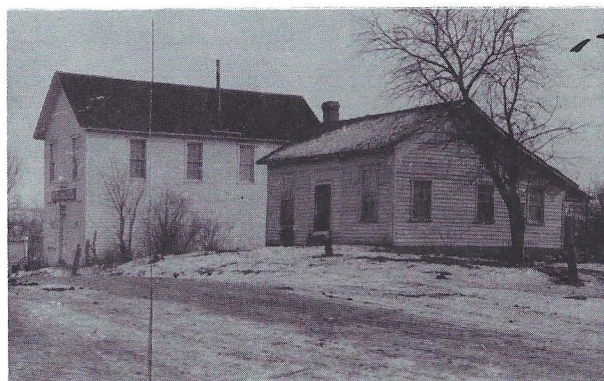
## The Masonic Lodge

The Masonic Lodge (Central Lodge No. 388, A.F. and A.M.) was located in Peoria, Iowa beginning September 10, 1878. It was officially chartered on June 4, 1879, with twelve members shown on the Charter. The lodge membership grew to an apparent peak of forty men in 1920. There were thirty-two members in 1927, when the Central Lodge consolidated with Mahaska Lodge No. 336 in New Sharon, Iowa, on July 12, 1927. The lodge meetings were held on the Wednesday evening on or before the full moon.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. E. N. Woodworth was known to be one of the founders of the Masonic Lodge in Peoria. The Masons met in the upstairs of the Bill Schubering (Shubring) store, later called the Flour House, (located across the street west from the present

Peoria Store). Many times they enjoyed an oyster stew at their evening meetings, and they often included their families for the program and the feed!

The Eastern Star, the affiliates of the Masons, also met from time to time.



Large building is Masonic Lodge upstairs and old store downstairs. Spain house in foreground, 1914.

## The Oddfellow Lodge and Rebekah Lodge

The Odd Fellows are known to have organized in Peoria as well as their affiliates, the Rebekahs. Dr. E. N. Woodworth was known to be one of the charter members.

The Oskaloosa Herald of May 2, 1895, states, "The Rebekahs have organized a lodge here. They had their first meeting April 18, and now have about thirty-five members."

Both the Odd Fellows and the Rebekahs were known to have met in the upstairs of the Town Hall. Their records were found when the building was moved to the Cemetery Hill in about 1927.

## ODD FELLOW LODGE

PEORIA LODGE, NO. 501, PEORIA, MAHASKA COUNTY<sup>12</sup>

Instituted December 27, 1889

Charter Members: E. N. Woodworth, Madison Tice  
L. D. Parker, Henry Coomes, Geo. W. Himmell.

Charter granted October 23, 1890

Grand Master: J. C. Longueville

Grand Secretary: William Garrett

Lodge moved to Taintor, Mahaska County,  
December 13, 1910.

Consolidated with New Sharon Lodge No. 231 of  
New Sharon, Mahaska County August 26, 1938



First

Semi-Annual Report of

P. O. of O. F. of

Lodge No. 501

I. O. of O. F. of

Peoria

County of Mahaska

State of Iowa, to the Grand Lodge of Iowa, for the Term ending June 30th, 1890.

Names of Persons Initiated	Names of Brothers Suspended	CAUSE OF SUSPENSION	Names of Brothers Expelled	CAUSE OF EXPULSION	Names of Brothers Reinstated
1. Allen, M. S.	26. Timbrel, C. A.				
2. Antry, Ransom	28. Vanelove, C. M.				
3. Berry, L.	30. Osborn, F. J.				
4. Berry, J. H.	31. Wessom, M.				
5. Clevenger, T. J.	32. Knull, J. C.				
6. Gayton, J.	33. Evans, C. R.				
7. Evans, D.	34. Kunschel, R.				

Names of Persons Initiated	Names of Brothers Suspended	CAUSE OF SUSPENSION	Names of Brothers Expelled	CAUSE OF EXPULSION	Names of Brothers Reinstated
8. Fleming, D.					
9. Fleming, D.					
10. Harass, M. P.					
11. Knull, J. C.					
12. Jackson, M.					
13. Lindsley, M. S.					
14. Lambhart, D.					
15. Lambhart, C.					
16. McAuley, O. L.					

Names of Brothers Admitted by Card

Names of Brothers withdrawn by Card

Names of Applicants Rejected

SUMMARY

RECEIPTS.

No. of Members per last report	24	Initiations	34	470.00
Initiated during the Term	24	Dues	41.38	47.78
Admitted by Card during the Term	4	Degrees	101	363
Reinstated to Membership	4	Admission	8	24
TOTAL	42	Sales of Cards		
Expelled		Contribution		
Withdrawn by Card				
Suspended				
Dropped for Non-Payment of Dues				
Deceased				
TOTAL				524.70
Now in Membership	42	Five per cent due		26.24
Number of Past Grands	1	G. Lodge of Iowa		
Number Rejected		No dues on Contributions		

Names of Brothers Dropped this Term

ELECTIVE OFFICERS FOR THE ENSUING YEAR.

17. Kuntchen, C.	Henry, Combs	N. G.
18. Kuntchen, A.	C. M. Vanelove	V. G.
19. Kuntchen, N. W.	J. D. Price	Treas.
20. Kuntchen, C. C.	Price, Smisher	Sec'y.
21. Kuntchen, A.		Per Sec.
22. Kuntchen, M. M.		
23. Kuntchen, M.		
24. Kuntchen, J.		
25. Kuntchen, J. M.		
26. Kuntchen, J.		
27. Kuntchen, J.		

Time of Meeting Tuesday Night.

In Witness Whereof, We have hereunto set our hands and affixed the seal of our Lodge, this 30th day of June, A. D. 1890.

(PLACE SEAL HERE.)

Attest:

Geo. W. Kinsman N. G.  
 Amy Coomes V. G.  
 Perry Smisher Secretary.

NOTE—Secretaries will please keep a copy of the Summary, so that reports hereafter can be made correct. W. and O. Fund not to be deducted. G. I. requires five per cent. on all receipts, as above, except for Contributions. Send P. O. Order, Registered Letter, or Draft for Dues.

C. S.



## REBEKAH LODGE

H. T. Willard No. 305, Peoria, Mahaska County

Instituted

Charter granted October 18, 1895

Grand Master: R. L. Tilton

Grand Secretary: William Musson

Surrendered in 1901

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup>Chan Fleming, personal interview.

<sup>3</sup>A. T. Andreas, Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa (Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875), p. 555.

<sup>4</sup>Will Lindley, Sketch of Peoria reading.

<sup>5</sup>Semira A. Phillips, The History of Mahaska Co. (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1875), p. 715.

<sup>6</sup>Phillips, p. 547.

<sup>7</sup>Fiftieth Anniversary Booklet, Peoria Christian Reformed Church, 1944.

<sup>8</sup>Will Lindley, Sketch of Peoria reading.

<sup>9</sup>Lindley.

<sup>10</sup>Fran Wehrle, personal interview.

<sup>11</sup>Tom Eggleston, Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Iowa, A. F. & A. M., Cedar Rapids, Ia.

<sup>12</sup>Ralph England, Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa.



## Chapter V

# Doctors in Peoria

### Rev. Doctor James L. Warren<sup>1</sup>

Not less distinguished, nor less favorably remembered among those who settled in this township at a very early date was Dr. James L. Warren who died at his home near Peoria, Mahaska Co. Jan. 1870, age 69 years. He was born in Green Co. Tenn. July 1, 1801, as one of 19 children to Robert Warren and Mary L. Warren. His father was in the American Revolutionary War of 1776.

James L. Warren immigrated to Iowa and settled in Lee Co. in 1841. In 1844 he moved to Mahaska County where he made his first claim. He afterwards abandoned the idea of settling there and made a claim about three miles south-east of where Pella is now, where he planted about twenty acres of corn and wheat in the spring following.

Dr. Warren was among the first of the ME church who preached in the county. He was licensed as a local preacher in 1828, ordained as deacon at Oskaloosa in 1852, and ordained as elder by Bishop Ames in 1863. He also commenced the practice of medicine in 1831, which he continued till a short time before his death. In this he was very successful during his residence in this county, especially in the management of the miasmatic diseases (malaria) to which the early settlers were subject. In his practice he ministered both in spiritual and temperal things. He was a man universally loved and respected by all who knew him, many instances illustrating of charitable nature, and many acts of kindness performed by him have been related to us and will be remembered by many who have shared the privations of pioneer life with him.

James L. Warren was married in 1825, to Jane Taylor (b. 1802, d. 1881). Their children were all born in Tennessee except William. Elbert (the 1st Postmaster), Robert (who had the Warren Mill), James, Sarah, Elizabeth, Nancy and William.

Dr. Warren died at his home near Peoria in January, 1870, at the age of 69 years. He is buried in the Peoria Cemetery.<sup>2</sup>



Rev. Dr. J. L. Warren, Peoria Cemetery.



## Dr. Dilley

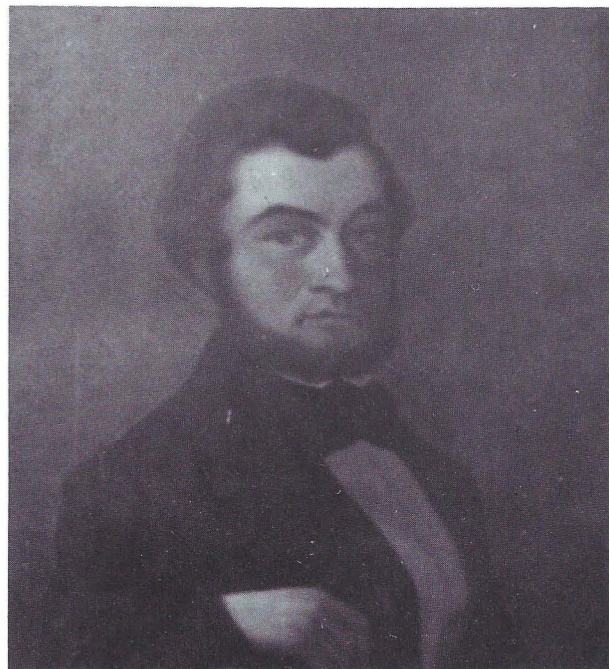
Little is known about Dr. Dilley. He graduated from Rush Medical College in Chicago in the winter of 1863. He came to Lynnville as its first physician and practiced medicine until 1867 when he left and moved to Peoria. Later he practiced at Beacon and from there he went to Colfax. Dr. Dilley died in Spickard, Missouri, Sept. 3, 1905, at the age of 75.<sup>3</sup>

## Dr. Spain

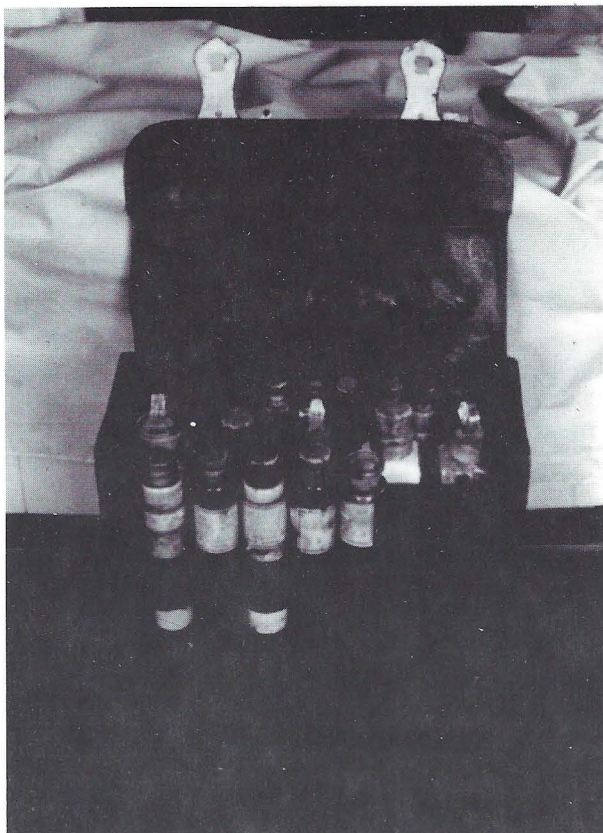
Dr. Spain was born in Champaign County, Ohio, June 17, 1836. He came to Peoria with his father and mother Theodric and Mary Spain about 1844. His father laid out the town of Peoria and Granville. Dr. Spain studied medicine three years with Dr. Woodworth of Peoria, and attended lectures at Keokuk and Iowa State University, graduating in the spring of 1865. He practiced a short time in Granville, Mahaska Co. but in 1866 he moved to Lynnville and practiced with Dr. Dilly.

Dr. Spain may have been Sanford Q. Spain the son of Theodric Spain. It is interesting to note that in the Peoria riot of Aug. 22, 1863, Dr. Spain received a wound in the leg during the gunfire that killed A. T. Alloway.

## Dr. Ezra N. Woodworth<sup>4</sup> (Doctor in Peoria from 1858-1878)



Dr. E. N. Woodworth. Picture courtesy of Allena (Lunt) Boone.



Medicine case used by Dr. Woodworth. Picture courtesy of Allena (Lunt) Boone.

Dr. Woodworth was born at Sandusky, Ohio in 1831. In 1854 he came to Mahaska County. He graduated from the Keokuk Medical School and began his practice in Peoria about 1858.\*

He married Eveline Hinkley who was born in 1844 in Marietta, Ohio. She came by covered wagon with her family to the Rose Hill area. They crossed the Mississippi River by ferry boat at Keokuk, Iowa.

Dr. Woodworth lived on the east edge of Peoria, east of the creek, south side of the road, where he owned 60 acres. The home also served as his office. His practice was mostly house calls made by means of a horse and buggy and with a sleigh in the winter. He often had a boy drive for him and care for the horses.

Three girls were born to the Woodworths; Julie who died in infancy, Alice (Allie), who attended Central College and played the organ at the Christian Church (died at the age of 25 of rheumatic fever) and Cora, Mrs. Walter Lunt.

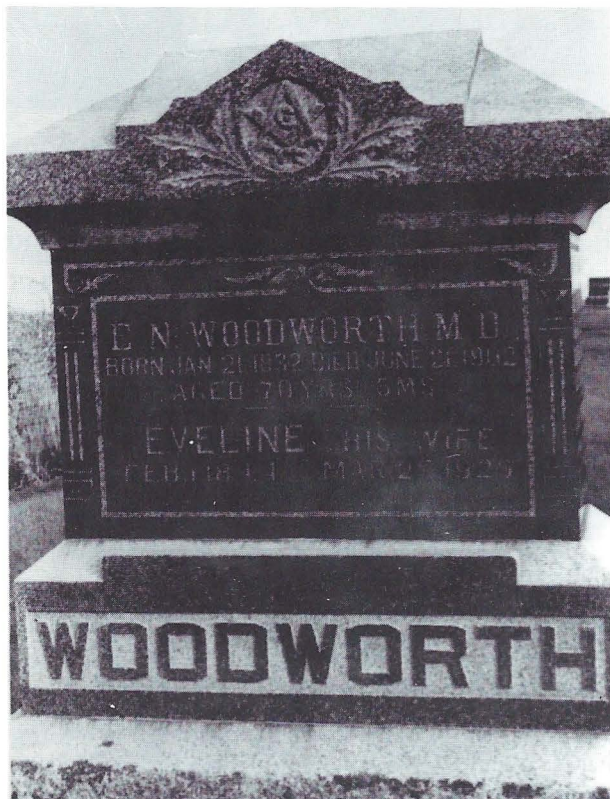
Dr. Woodworth practiced 20 years at Peoria until about 1878. He moved to Lamar in southern



Missouri where the winters were not so cold and long.

Dr. Woodworth was one of the founders of the Lodge in Peoria. He died in 1902 and is buried in the Peoria Cemetery. His wife Eveline died in 1928.

\*The graduates of Keokuk were called homeopaths.



Dr. Woodworth, Peoria Cemetery.



Illia (Lunt) Holscher and Allena (Lunt) Boone, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Walter (Cora) Lunt, and granddaughters of Dr. Woodworth. Our appreciation to these sisters for information about Dr. Woodworth.



Dr. Frank and Kittie Quire. Courtesy of Lynnville Centennial Book.

Dr. Frank E. Quire M.D.<sup>5</sup>  
(Doctor in Peoria 1892-1901)

Dr. Frank E. Quire was born in Lynnville, Iowa, November 22, 1867. His father Dr. Charles Quire was a physician in Lynnville along with Frank's brother Dr. Austin Quire.

At one time Frank was a student of music at Grinnell College. In order to pay his way and save money toward his medical education, he interrupted his college work to teach school and to give piano lessons. One of his students was Kittie Ratcliff who later became his wife.



At one time the home of Dr. F. E. Quire.

Frank went from Grinnell School of Music to the Iowa City School of Medicine and from there to Chicago where he graduated from Rush Medical School with an M.D. degree in 1892. In order to finance his medical education he played at dances and cut cylinder phonograph records.

From 1892 to 1901, Dr. F. E. Quire practiced medicine in Peoria. By 1896 his practice was well enough established, that he and Kittie were married and bought their first home in Peoria. It was here that their first child Charlie was born in





Dr. Frank Quire when retired in Lynnville, Iowa.

1898. (This was the Louis Crowder home — later the Tabe Vander Veen home.)

Of those years in Peoria, Dr. Quire later recalled, "I drove two teams there and had more business than a cranberry merchant." Shortly after he started his practice in Peoria, many people came down with diphtheria. "There was an old doctor there at the time and he was using old remedies," Dr. Quire said. "I started inoculations and licked the disease!"

Later, in the Granville and Peoria communities, a typhoid fever plague started. The doctor treated about 15 cases in a short time. "We started a program of cleaning up wells and have had none since," he said.

Dr. Quire worked to get the railroad in Peoria but was unsuccessful. When he failed, he decided to leave. He said, "It's easier for me to go to the railroad than to get the railroad to come to me." In 1901, he moved to Taintor, Iowa, where he had an office for eleven years. In 1912, he moved to Lynnville where he practiced medicine until his death on October 1, 1959, at the age of 92. His wife Kittie died in 1935.

## Dr. Logue

A Dr. Logue lived in Peoria. Little information is available. On April 6, 1903 the board of trustees of Richland Township authorized Dr. Logue to quarantine Austin Fleming for scarlet fever. Dr. Logue is believed to have owned the large two-



This home once stood where the telephone building now stands. It served as the home and office of Dr. Logue. It was later moved east of Peoria where it became the home of Johnson Lunt.

story home located where the telephone building is now. The home also served as his office. It was later moved east of Peoria where it became the home of Johnson Lunt. Dr. Logue preceded Dr. Chase.

## Dr. Chase

A Dr. Chase lived in Peoria for a time in about 1909. He preceded Dr. Ayres.

## Dr. C. A. Ayres

Dr. Ayres (wife Louise) began practicing medicine in Peoria in about 1912. On April 1, 1912, the board of trustees of Richland Township appointed Dr. Ayres as health officer for the township. Dr. Ayres lived in the home later occupied by Jake Vander Molen. He moved in 1915 to practice medicine in Leighton, Iowa.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Wm. M. Donnel, Pioneers of Marion County (Des Moines: Republican Steam Printing House, 1872), pp. 149-152.

<sup>2</sup>Janice Cruickshank, Donnellson, Iowa, correspondence.

<sup>3</sup>Memories, Yesterday and Today, Lynnville Centennial, 1975, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Allena Boone, granddaughter of Dr. Woodworth, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, correspondence.

<sup>5</sup>Lynnville Centennial, p. 147.



## Chapter VI

# Public School, ME (Methodist) Church and Christian Church

### The Public School

The first school in Richland Township was taught in the winter of 1846-1847, in a log cabin belonging to Thompson Baldwin. The teacher was Mary Westlake, who here kept a subscription school, having probably ten or twelve pupils. The next school was also a private enterprise, in the same place, and conducted by Warren Lathrop.<sup>1</sup>

The first public schoolhouse was just east of Peoria, exact location not known. It was erected about 1856, and was made from native lumber hauled from Keokuk.

The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald, June 6, 1876, stated,

Our winter schools are now in session. One department, (the principal) taught



**Peoria Richland Township School 1913.**

Taken in 1913, we have a picture of the Peoria Richland Township school.

Little girls and the older girls wore ribbons in those days. The hair was usually in braids and tied with a large bow. Bangs were not unusual and one child seems to have bobbed hair. There was no question about which were the lads and who were the lassies!

Standing at the back was the teacher Dale Hess (D). Others standing include Forrest Dunwoody, Johnnie Van Cleave (D), John Dyloff, Jessie Dyloff (D), Bessie Van Cleave, Clarence

Sheehy (D), Fred Kool, George Jackson (D).

Seated on bench are Pauline Warren, Christine Van Der Heuvel, Ella Langstraat, Ida Dyloff, Sarah Langstraat, Henrietta VanDer Heuvel, Frances Van Cleave and Fern De Bruyn.

Front row, seated on ground, are Harry Jackson, Dick Langstraat, Ray De Bruyn and Milton Van Cleave.

Former teachers of the school included Hollis Byram; Ethel White, Dale Hess, Barbara Farnsworth, Debbie Timbrel, Sara Jane Cotten, Irene Pol and Anna Mae Williams.





Peoria Public School, June 11, 1915. Boy on pony is Roy De Bruyn.

by Miss Mollie Kiser; the primary, by Miss Emma Forker. The former has taught a number of terms here and has always been considered a 1st class teacher, but this term she is excelling herself. The latter is teaching her 1st term in this place and is giving general satisfaction.

We have quite an interesting literary society, where the talent of the town and vicinity meet once a week to enjoy a pleasant and profitable evening together.

Later in 1876, when the teacher's county library was set up, Peoria was set up as one of the three branch offices out of the central library in Oskaloosa which had 33 volumes.

Phillips listed the teachers of 1877.<sup>2</sup>

Emma Z. McAuley address Peoria, terms taught 12, institutes attended 5.  
Cleo McAuley address Peoria, terms taught 7, institutes attended 3.  
Iva J. Koontz address Peoria, terms taught 1, institutes attended 1.

The school soon became too small. Again the Herald reported on Jan. 6, 1876, "Our school-house is entirely too small and will be replaced at an early day by one adequate to our wants."

In 1878, a large two room public school was built on the cemetery hill, south of the Methodist Church. Three sessions were held, fall, winter, and spring. Enrollment in this school hit an all time high of 130 pupils in 1888.

Will Lindley recalled,<sup>3</sup>

The teachers of the winter of 1880-1881 were two sisters, Laura and Mary Brand, of Pella. Laura taught the advanced room as it was then called. I do not recall all the teachers' names, but among those who taught here when I attended were Lee Billings, O. R. Shaw, with Agnes Long as assistant, O. L. McAuley and Granville Warren.

Mrs. Tom Gosnel (Rose Florence Jackson) later wrote,<sup>4</sup>

So many, many things I remember in regard to our school both in the old building and the newer two room school. I attended both. It is with pleasure I recall the names of some of my teachers, O. R. Shaw who died in 1952 at the age of 91. My two sisters, one brother and I went to school to Mr. Shaw. Other teachers were my sister La Vinnia Jackson Gosnell, Elsie Boyd Klinker, Cora Woodworth Lunt (daughter of Dr. Woodworth), John Taylor, and my last teacher Syl Reynolds (teacher in 1892). I taught two years in the country schools and then took the intermediate work in Peoria. In those days the school year was divided in two terms, spring and summer, fall and winter. The last three years of my teaching was in Peoria and did I love it! Salary \$25 and \$30 per month.

Wanda Lunt, Montfred Lunt, and Joe Swisher are also known to have taught at this school.



Peoria Public School



Esther (Grootveld) DeZwarte taught the 1934-1935 term. She recalls how the annual Spelling Bee was held. All participants came from the various surrounding county schools to compete. The spelling bee was held in the Town Hall. The winner went on to higher competition. All the 8th graders of the Township also took their examinations in the Town Hall.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Glen Ruby was the teacher for the 1936-1937 and the 1937-1938 terms. As the enrollment declined, two rooms were no longer needed. The east room of the school was then used for classes and the west room for play in rainy weather.

At the end of the term in 1935, with only seven pupils left, the school closed.



Peoria Public School, 1938. Front row, L-R: Wilbur Langstraat, Agnes Langstraat, Nellie Faye Zwank, Dena Swank, Alberta Swank. Back Row: Henry Langstraat, Jimmy Swank, Lloyd Swank, Jacob Swank, Glenn Ruby, teacher. Picture compliments of Glen Ruby.

### The Methodist Episcopal Church (ME Church)

The first religious services in Richland Township were those conducted by a circuit rider of the ME Church, who held services in George Westlake's cabin sometime prior to the building of the first church.

The first church built in the township was the Methodist Church at Peoria, in 1856.<sup>6</sup> Its organization was filed March 31, 1856 by the following trustees: I. S. Warren, George Westlake, Newton S. Cantrill, Steven F. Cantril, Eli A. Spain, Robert B. Warren and John Cantril. It is said to have been built by Theodrick Spain, three years after he laid out the town, with lumber hauled in from Keokuk.

There was no regular pastor but Sunday School was held regularly. In 1858, Phineus F. Bresee was appointed by the Methodist Conference to serve the Peoria charge. In 1862, Peter H. Early supplied in Peoria. He also managed the Smith



1914, Methodist Church. Compliments of Chan Fleming.

Store in Granville.<sup>7</sup> Rev. Dr. James L. Warren, a physician served as a local pastor.

Phillips wrote from her own memories as she vividly describes those old fashioned Methodist Churches and religious meetings of the 1850's.<sup>8</sup>

In these days of fine churches, with cushioned pews or opera chairs, carpets, pipe organs and electric lights, young people smile at the idea of holding meetings in little log cabins lighted with a tallow candle or a grease lamp made in a piepan; but we who lived here fifty years ago and helped to lay the foundation of Iowa's present greatness, saw nothing ludicrous in those crude and humble beginnings. Heavenly meetings were held in those little cabins. For a Methodist preacher, in those days, training in a Theological school was not thought to be necessary, but to be soundly converted, feel a call to preach, and have a tolerable education were the main requirements. Some of that class found their way into the wilds of the New Purchase fifty years ago, and with an eloquence born of faith and an earnest desire to serve God and save souls, stirred and melted the hearts of their hearers. Souls were converted and shouts of joy were heard. Prayers and old-fashioned Methodist songs and love feast meetings, where the brethren and sisters would meet and relate their Christian experiences, made those little log cabins seem "Heavenly places."



For the consideration of Forty Dollars we hereby Convey to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Town of Poria Mahaska County Iowa viz The following described Lot of Land commencing Thirty three <sup>feet</sup> North of South Half of North half of North East Quarter Section 22 Township Seventy seven North of Range Seventeen West Thence East 10 Rods Thence North 8 Rods Thence West 10 Rods Thence South 8 Rods to the Place of Beginning containing one Half Acre known as the Lot the M. E. Church House now stands on — and we warrant the Title to the Same unto the Said Trustees of the M. E. Church against all Persons Whomsoever —

Executed this 28<sup>th</sup> day of June 1858 Lewis Crowder  
in presence of Amanda Angeline Crowder  
Theodrich Spain

State of Iowa  
Mahaska County

Before me Benjamin Wintersmutter a Justice of the Peace in and for Mahaska County personally appeared the above named Lewis Crowder and Mandy Crowder his wife personally known to me to be the Identical Persons whose names are affixed to the foregoing Deed as Grantors and acknowledged the above Instrument to be their Voluntary act and deed for the Purpose therein expressed This June 28<sup>th</sup> 1858

Theodrich Spain J.P.

Document conveying property to the ME (Methodist) Church by Lewis Crowder, for \$40 on June 28, 1858.





1914 picnic, Peoria Methodist Church. Compliments of Chan Fleming.

A new M.E. Church was built in 1872. The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald of January 6, 1876, describes it as, "a fine house, 40' x 60' well built and finished. It was the most prominent building of the town, being the largest and it stood on the highest point of land."<sup>9</sup> It was located on the Cemetery Hill where the township hall now stands.

The Methodist church reported in the May 26, 1892 Oskaloosa Daily Herald, "We had a good sermon last Sunday in the M.E. Church by Rev. Colier. His subject was "The Great Judgement Day." Our people are making arrangements for the 30th of May. We expect Rev. I. P. Teter."

In 1893, the churches included in the Peoria circuit were Granville, Taintor, Garden Hill, New Salem and Hickory Grove; and that year revivals were held at Garden Hill, New Salem, Peoria and Taintor.<sup>10</sup>

The Methodist Church continued to function into the 20th century. Peter Appel and Tel Wehrle are names which appear as active, supporting members.

There was always a Memorial Day Program at the M.E. Church. The local school teachers would prepare a patriotic program and the children of the different schools would sing and recite poetry. They had a flag parade through the cemetery and decorated graves.<sup>11</sup>

The end was inevitable as the Hollanders moved in and organized their own church. The Methodist Church closed its doors about 1918.

In the spring of 1927, the church building was put up for auction. Mr. Jake Rus purchased the lumber and stone.

### The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The dedication of the Christian Church at Peoria took place in 1870. The following was taken from Christian Standard, 1870, Oct. 22, p. 341.<sup>12</sup>

#### Dedication at Peoria, Iowa

Our house of worship is nearly completed, and we have decided on the third Lord's Day in October for the dedication. The brethren everywhere are cordially invited to come up and enjoy a good meeting with us. We expect good speakers. There will be three discourses during the day — at 10½ a.m., 3 p.m., and 7½ p.m. Preaching brethren especially, are invited to attend.

Done by order of the Church.

M. Nichols.

Peoria, Iowa Sept. 12, 1870.

The church was located in what is now the eastern edge of the Peoria Cemetery, on the west side of the street that was then present. The church building faced the east. Its dimensions were 40' x 50', slightly smaller than the Methodist Church.

The Oskaloosa Herald of May 2, 1895, reported,

T. W. McDonald filled his regular appointment at the Christian Church last Sunday. Large



# WARRANTY DEED.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS: That the Church of Christ (commonly called the Christian Church), by William Sheesley, O. R. Shaw, and A. P. Kitching, Trustees, of the County of Mahaska and State of Iowa, for and in consideration of Ten Dollars in hand paid, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, does by these presents grant, bargain, sell and convey unto Trustees of Richland Township of the County of Mahaska and State of Iowa, all the right, title, and interest as grantors in and to the following described real estate, situated and lying in the County of Mahaska and State of Iowa, to wit:

Lot One (1) of Block Five (5) in West Addition to the Town of Peoria, Iowa. To be used as cemetery of said Township

And we Warrant the title to the same to the said Trustees and to their <sup>successors</sup> ~~heirs~~ or assigns, against all persons whomsoever.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Church of Christ, or Christian Church, a corporation, has caused these presents to be signed by its trustees, and said Trustees also convey as such trustees for said corporation, this Fifth day of September 1905.

A. P. Kitching  
W. M. Sheesley  
O. R. Shaw Trustees.

STATE OF IOWA, Mahaska County, ss.

On this Fifth day of September 1905, before me appeared William Sheesley, O. R. Shaw, and A. P. Kitching, to me personally known, who being by me duly sworn, did say that they are the trustees of the corporation the Church of Christ (commonly called the Christian Church), that the same has no seal, and that said instrument was signed in behalf of said corporation, by authority of its members and officers and trustees, and that said trustees also executed said instrument for themselves and acknowledge it to be the voluntary act and deed of said corporation, and that they executed the same as their voluntary act and deed as such trustees of said corporation.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name on the day and year first above written.

W. E. Ashton  
Justice of the Peace in and

September 5, 1905 Warranty Deed transferring property of the Christian Church to trustees of Richland Township for cemetery use.



crowds were present. There were three additions by primary obedience. We organized a fine Sunday School in the afternoon. The officers chosen were Elsie Boyd, superintendent; Thomas Ashton, asst. supt.; Ada Smith, sec.; Nettie Fleming, treas.; the teachers were Hanna Shimer, Emma Smith, Hattie Tice, Nettie Fleming, Lovie Boyd, and Mollie Burks.

A little other information has been found al-

though the Oskaloosa Herald of July 22, 1897, states, "The basket dinner at the Christian Church last Sunday evening was well attended."

It is also known that Allie Woodworth, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Woodworth was an excellent musician and played the organ at the Christian Church.<sup>13</sup>

The Christian Church closed its doors soon after the turn of the century.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Semira A. Phillips, History of Mahaska Co., (Des Moines, Union Historical Co., 1878), p. 547.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips, p. 331.

<sup>3</sup>Will Lindley, Sketch of Peoria, about 1928, reading.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Tom Gosnel (Rose Florence Jackson), Reminiscences of Peoria.

<sup>5</sup>Mrs. Esther (Grootveld) De Zwarte, personal interview.

<sup>6</sup>Manoah Hedge, Past and Present of Mahaska Co., 1906.

<sup>7</sup>Dr. Beverly S. Young, History of Taintor, Iowa.

<sup>8</sup>Semira A. Phillips, Mahaska County-Reminiscences, (Oskaloosa: Herald Print, 1900), p. 152.

<sup>9</sup>Will Lindley, Sketch of Peoria, about 1928, reading.

<sup>10</sup>Dr. Beverly Young, History of Taintor, Iowa.

<sup>11</sup>Allena (Lunt) Boone, correspondence.

<sup>12</sup>Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee, correspondence.

<sup>13</sup>Allena (Lunt) Boone, correspondence.



## Chapter VII

# Peoria Stores

Although accounts vary and reports are conflicting, it seems most probable that at one time in the village of Peoria there were three stores. The majority of businesses were located on Main Street which ran east and west through town. Cross Street came from the south and intersected Main at what is now Veenstra's Store.

A reading, "Sketch of the Village of Peoria," by Will Lindley was given at the Old Settlers Reunion on Sunday, August 1, year unknown but perhaps 1928. His sketch has been helpful in putting together the history of the stores.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lindley writes, "The first view I had of Peoria was the first week in March, 1880, from the hill south of town known as the Allen Hill" (now known as Temptation Hill). He continued, "When I first knew Peoria, there were three stores."

"Store One" was located on the north side of Main Street at the intersection on Main and Cross. Today this would be north across the street from Veenstra's Store and a few feet west. It was probably the most flourishing of the three stores. It was the predecessor of the present Peoria Store.

"Store Two" was located on the south side of Main Street, across the street west of the present Veenstra's Store and located near the top of the hill just east of where Mr. and Mrs. Wavern Rozenboom live.

"Store Three" can only be located from an 1871 Peoria map which places it on the west side of Cross Street, located a few feet south and east of what is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Rozenboom.

### "Store One"

Phillips, in her history of Mahaska County, writes that McCutchin owned the first general store. It can not be determined which store this was or where it was located. It could well have been "store one." Lindley, in his sketch men-



"Store one" later called the McAuley Store. Signs read: Sherwin Williams Paints, Horse Shoe Tobacco, J. T. Tobacco. Picture compliments of Wanda (Allen) Hamre.

tioned, "John McCutchin who owned and operated the store on the north side of the street for several years, selling his stock out to Albert Smith." Albert S. Smith and Sylvester L. Spain are known to have been the proprietors of "store one" for a number of years from about 1875 to 1882.

The store was on the north side of the street and faced the south. A high porch was located on the front with steps leading up from the west. The porch made an ideal place for the old settlers to sit and loaf. The hitching post for horses was located in the front for the convenience of the customers. Behind this store on the north side of the road was located the ice house or shed.

The store had an extra room attached on the west. Lindley writes, "Before I forget it I will state that in the west part of the store on the north side of the street was a harness shop owned and operated by Christopher Joy, better known as "Chris" (C. C. Joy) who sold or traded out and moved to Nebraska in 1881 or 1882." The same room was in later years used for clothes, children's clothing and the like.

The main building was stocked with groceries and general merchandise. It was known to have an ample stock of tobacco. The stove was located in the middle. A grocery store in that day often in-



cluded a barrel of whiskey in its staple stock, which was dealt out in quantities from a fraction of a pint to a number of gallons. Whether this store, or the others, was a source of whiskey is not known but it could well have been.

The post office was located in this store for many years. It was positioned on the east side of the aisle. The store owner was frequently the postmaster. Albert S. Smith was the postmaster from 1880 - 1883. Sylvester L. Spain was the postmaster from 1897 - 1901.

In 1882 Will Sheesley is reported to have bought the store with his partner Leonidous McAuley (brothers-in-law). They were in the business a good number of years until about 1905, and had a good trade. A news clipping in the Oskaloosa Herald of July 22, 1897, states,

In spite of hard times our town is prospering in fine shape and we are not dead by considerable. Sheesley and McAuley are doing a large business here this season. They run a large store where you can purchase almost anything in the line of dry goods, groceries, hardware, queensware and they also handle a fine line of agricultural implements.

Allena (Lunt) Boone, granddaughter of Dr. Woodworth, writes in her memories,

The store had the sugar and flour in barrels. We took our eggs and sold them at the store. We took our kerosene can to the store and when they filled it they put a gum drop over the spout to keep it from spilling. The Lunt kids would drive a gentle old horse and buggy to the store to get groceries. They always put a little pack of candy in the sack of groceries. Sometimes the girls would walk to the store with a big basket and buy Christmas gifts.

The "huckster wagon" or general store on wheels, was an important part of merchandising during the early part of the 1900's. It was pulled by horses or mules as it went from farm to farm, selling groceries and dry goods on a regular route and time table.

As the huckster wagon pulled up to the farmer's door, the children would rush out for their free stick of candy. The lady of the house would also go out to the wagon and choose the items necessary for her household such as groceries or dry goods, or a spool of thread, some



Huckster wagon as it appeared in that day.

lace, etc. The hucksters were even willing to do some trading to get business and very often eggs were taken in trade for merchandise.

During the years of Sheesley and McAuley, the story is told of a Jim Rovaart who worked for the store. He was the man who took the huckster wagon and horses to make deliveries in the country. His delivery route included Lower Grove, a community known in that day to be one where everyone took the law into his own hands. In those days it was said "Peoria was rough but Lower Grove was rougher!" Rovaart's boss instructed him to carry a gun with him for safety and protection whenever he went into the Lower Grove area. Rovaart was hesitant but finally obliged. Said he later, "I carried the gun in one pocket but the bullets in the other."

McAuley did a good business and was successful in his store. It is reported that when he sold out he said, "I worked in the store for 20 years. I made \$1000 per year and left with \$20,000."



Johannes Thomassen

About 1905, Johannes H. Thomassen took over the business from Sheesley and McAuley. Thomassen had experience in other stores, first in Prairie City, then Galesberg and finally he bought the Peoria Store in about 1905. Thomassen also



**Sheesley & McAuley,**

DEALERS IN

**General Merchandise, Clothing, Dry Goods,**LADIES' AND GENTS' FURNISHING GOODS,  
HARDWARE, GROCERIES, ETC.

Peoria, Iowa, Feb 6 1901.

Feb 1 1900	Oil	8
" 10	Oil & Matches	20
Feb 24	Oil	15
Mar 2 1900	Oil	15
" 16	4 Lamps	1 60
"	2 plates	20
" 17	Oil	15
April 7 1900	Oil	15
May 12 1900	Oil	30
" 25	Broom <sup>35</sup> Lye <sup>25</sup>	60
" 25	Screen Door 4 yds 28 in Wire	1 60
"	6 yards 26 in Wire	84
"	Tex <sup>25</sup> Nail <sup>10</sup> Screen Door Hinge	50
" 27	Nail	10
" 31	Paint	2 50
June 4 1900	Nails	10
"	3 qts Paint <sup>120</sup> Nails <sup>10</sup>	1 30
" 5	Nails	40
" 6	Nails	25
" 19	18 # Nails	90
" 22	20 #	1 00

Invoice of merchandise sold to the Christian Reformed Church, February 6, 1901.



was the postmaster in 1905, during the last few months the post office was in existence. Star-kenberg, a crippled man, was associated with Thomassen in the store for a short time.

In about 1911, Thomassen built a new store, the building which for years stood as Dahm's Store.

### "Store Two"

"Store two" was located west across the street from the present Veenstra's Store. It was a two story building. The main floor served as the store and the upstairs as the Masonic Hall.



"Store two" 1914, Spain house in the foreground. New Peoria Store in the background. Signs read: Ethan Allen Flour, Shoes. Compliments of Chan Fleming.

One name which surfaces in the history of the town is Charles B. Shields. Phillips, in 1878, stated that, "C. B. Shields was a farmer and merchant, came to Mahaska Co. in 1868, at age 34, owns 160 acres, and is a dealer in grand merchandise at Peoria." It cannot be determined which store Shields was associated with but it was probably "store two."<sup>2</sup> C. B. Shields and his wife moved from Peoria in 1907 to Valley Falls, Kansas.

It seems probable that Coomes and Kimmell followed Shields as proprietor of "store two." Lindley, when speaking of the 1880's wrote, "Henry Coomes and George Kimmell used to own the store under the Masonic Hall for several years."

Bill Schubring (also Shubring and Schoebring) was also known to be a groceryman in this store, probably near the turn of the century. During his time, Mortimer Jackson used a part of the space for the mending of shoes.<sup>3</sup>

The upper story of the building continued to be used as a Masonic Hall until the group disbanded in 1927.

During the years that Jacob and Henry Dahm ran Dahm's Store, the building was used for the storing of flour during which time it was called "the flour house". The building was torn down in the 1930's.

### "Store Three"

From the 1871 Peoria map, the store was located on Cross Street, just south and east of where Gerald Rozenboom now lives.

The Weekly Herald of June 6, 1876, refers to a store run by Messrs. Brown and Kelly. It is assumed that this was "store three". No other information is available.

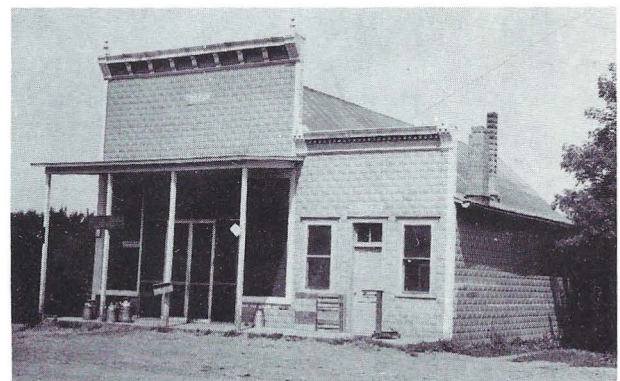
### Thomassen's New Store

In about 1911, Johannes H. Thomassen built the present Peoria Store to replace the old one ("store one"). The lower portion of the front of the store was moved from Pella and came from the front of the Y. T. Van Niewaal Clothing Store since it was being remodeled. The Van Niewaal building is still standing and is now the T&D Department Store.

Clarence Warren, grandson of Dr. James L. Warren, worked for Thomassen as a clerk as long as he had it (Warren had also worked for Sheesley and McAuley). Warren also drove the huckster wagon, pulled by mules into the rural areas.

Thomassen lived close by in the house located east of the store. Other storekeepers who followed him also lived in the same home — J. J. Stuursma, Mart Vander Molen, and Jacob Dahm.

A story is told by many eyewitnesses of a unique delivery system. The Thomassens owned a



Peoria Store about 1914. Signs read: Ethan Allen Flour, Sherwin Williams Paint & Wallpaper, Selz-Shoes — make your feet glad. Compliments of Chan Fleming.



large Collie dog. Mrs. Thomassen would put an order for groceries in a basket and put it in the mouth of the dog and send it to the store. The clerk would fill the grocery order, place the items in the basket, and the basket in the dog's mouth. The dog was given a treat after completing the delivery!

These were still the days of horses as people depended on them for transportation. The hitching post was moved from the old store to just south of the new store where it was used until the coming of the automobile.

The main entrance to the store was on the west where it is today, which is the door the customers used. A smaller door was located midway in the north wall, which was very convenient for the storekeeper to use as he could quickly exit down on a path to his house for coffee or lunch.

In the northeast corner of the store were steps which led up to a loft where the bookkeeping was done. These were the days when the customer would come in with a grocery order, give it to the clerk, and the clerk would gather the items. Sugar, salt, navy beans, and coffee beans were purchased in the bulk. The customers would grind their own coffee beans. Milk was not available in the store as refrigeration did not exist. Neither was bread available as an item to purchase, as the baking of bread was done at home. Flour was sold in 25 or 50 lb. sacks and the cloth sacks were used to make garments.

Not long after the new store was built, Thomassen sold out to Rut Kaldenberg and Bill



Rut Kaldenberg as a merchant in Sully, Iowa. Compliments of Sully Centennial Book.



Mart Vander Molen (at the wheel) and J. J. Stuursma about 1915.

Van Dusseldorp in about 1913. The relationship didn't last long. Van Dusseldorp soon sold his share to J. J. Stuursma in 1914, and Kaldenberg and Stuursma operated the store for about a year. Then Mart Vander Molen took over Rut Kaldenberg's share as Kaldenberg moved out to the Sully area where he operated a store there. Stuursma and Vander Molen had the store together for about a year. Vander Molen would pick up eggs and deliver groceries, first with a touring car and later a truck. Vander Molen soon left the business and Stuursma became the sole proprietor. Several clerks are remembered to have worked in the store during these years. Nellie Bulthuis, Effie (Stuursma) Pothoven, Anna (Stuursma) Vander Schaaf, Jeanette (Vos) Nibbelink, and Effie (Stuursma) Dahm, daughter of J.J. Stuursma. Effie later married Jacob Dahm in 1925.

Effie Dahm vividly remembers the days when the Gypsies would come around with an old jalopy and steal things and merchandise. They would travel around the county and camp by the Skunk



Peoria Store about 1920. Anna (Stuursma) Vander Schaaf, Effie (Stuursma) Dahm, clerks.





Nellie Bulthuis, clerk in 1914.

River. One Gypsy would keep the clerk busy while the other one was active in thievery.

Herm Vos began working in the store for J. J. Stuursma in 1919, after the war was over, at the age of 22. Herm ran a Model T Ford truck for Stuursma. Groceries for the Peoria Store would come from Taintor, Oskaloosa, or Pella but at this time (1919) Herm would get the groceries from H. L. Spencer in Oskaloosa and would bring the eggs and poultry to Rynsberger in Oskaloosa. The cream went to Pella. Herm was also the cream tester for Stuursma.

### Peoria Store – A family business for 75 years

J. J. Stuursma was in the store from 1914 - 1924 for a total of ten years.

Jacob and Henry Dahm (brothers) purchased the store from Stuursma in 1924. For a period of time the store was open for business on Wednesday and Saturday evenings but later the practice was discontinued.

The two men operated the store together for twenty years. Henry then sold his share to his brother as he went into farming.

In 1956, Jake sold the business to his son-in-law, Richard Van Kooten, who operated the store for 33 years until December of 1989 when he sold the business to Wynne and Patty Veenstra. This ended a 75-year-old family tradition and business from J. J. Stuursma to Jacob Dahm to Rich Van Kooten. At this time the name was changed from Dahm's Store to Veenstra Farm and Home Supply.



Rich Van Kooten and son Robert.

Remember: The telephone back then? The store was 3 on 44. Three shorts on line 44. Of course, everyone listened!



Henry Dahm with his 1918 Model T Roadster. Peoria Store, 1924-1944.



Remember: The old pot-bellied stove in the middle of the store and all the philosophy and economics discussed there? The old timers still say if FDR had listened to their advice, the country wouldn't be in such a mess as it is!

Remember: Henry would run the store while Jake would do the egg route and make deliveries. Jake would go to Pella every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons to take eggs to the Pella Produce and bring back necessary produce.

Remember: How buttermilk was delivered to the farmers by the barrel. To unload, find a soft spot on the ground and land the barrel on its edge on an old tire and hope!

Remember: The hours spent at checker playing by the loafers. The Dutch were fond of their checker game. When the times were tough and checkers were scarce, white and pink peppermints made good substitutes!



Jacob Dahm in the Peoria Store for 32 years from 1924-1956.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Will Lindley, "Sketch of Peoria," old settlers reunion, about 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Semira A. Phillips, History of Mahaska County, Des Moines Historical Co., 1878, p. 718.

<sup>3</sup>Wylde (Jackson) Axmear, personal interview.



## Chapter VIII

# Coming of the Hollanders

The coming of the Hollanders to Mahaska and Marion counties was to have a vast effect on the area for years to come. Phillips vividly describes the summer of 1847, and the coming of the Hollanders to Mahaska and Marion counties.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1847 the people in and around Oskaloosa were thrown into a state of excitement and expectation, on hearing that a large colony of Hollanders were coming through here and were going to settle and build a town on the divide about eighteen miles northwest of Oskaloosa. We were told that these people were a very pious set of Protestant Christians who had left their native country on account of religious persecution. We knew very little of Holland and Hollanders. I mean the people generally. A few of us had learned from our geographies that Holland was a country of canals and much of its land had been reclaimed from the sea, and every foot was utilized and cultivated until Holland was one vast garden and network of water-ways, outside of its towns and cities. We had some vague recollections of having heard or read of Holland being a place of refuge for those who were persecuted for their religious belief. It seemed a little strange that Holland people should be seeking refuge among us for the same cause. Not many of us had ever seen a Hollander, and when they came along the road in various kinds of wagons drawn by various kinds of teams, we gazed in wonder at their quaint and unfamiliar appearance. Their dress was strange to us. Women were perched upon high piles of queer looking chests and boxes and trunks, many of them wearing caps,

but no bonnets. Some of the men, and women too, wore wooden shoes, which was entirely new to us. We were prepared to think well of this people, for we had heard only good of their character. We had been told that they were an honest, moral, industrious, God-fearing people, and from that time to the present have never heard it disputed. Many of them stopped at my father-in-law's place to purchase provender for their teams. Some took meals with us, some camped out in the lane or barnyard. But whether they had their meals in the house, or by a campfire, or simply took a lunch in their hands and sat on the wagon tongue to eat it, not one of them failed to bow their heads and give thanks.

In the winter following there was much passing up and down the road in quest of supplies for the colony. They would come in to warm, take off their wooden shoes by the fire, throw a shovel full of coals and hot ashes in each shoe, shake them around, throw the fire out, slap on their shoes again, light their pipes and be ready for another spell of battling with cold. All these Hollanders had money, some had a good deal, and they all seemed to know the best way to invest it. That colony was an organized body. Mr. H. P. Scholte was their president. He was a fine looking man, and looked like a leader of men. He was not only their leader in temporal affairs, but was their minister. People used to speak of Mr. Scholte as the Hollander's "Prophet, Priest and King."

Some of the Holland families who came to Pella in the beginning were wealthy, educated and cultivated, among whom



were Mr. and Mrs. Bosquet and their boys, Peter and Henry. Those boys as I recollect them forty-six years ago were perfect models of good breeding. Their mother was a handsome and a lovely lady. I have been told by one who knows, that every member of that colony brought with them from their native home, a certificate of good character. It wasn't long before their superior farming and gardening began to be noticed and talked about, and many slovenly farmers were induced to make more out of their rich lands through the example of those frugal and thrifty Hollanders. They were not only industrious and prosperous but were hospitable. I used to hear it said that in every Hollander's house the coffee pot was always on the fire and every stranger or neighbor who entered was offered a cup of hot coffee and some kind of cakes, no matter what time of day it was. Those people made the journey from their native land to the land of their adoption through great tribulation. Many died at sea, and with aching hearts they witnessed the burying of precious ones in the deep, deep sea. But they were a people of faith, the kind of faith which gave courage to endure almost all things. We used to wonder at the pluck, the endurance and the patience of those people. I think every observing person who has watched their progress and methods from that first colony's arrival to the present time

will say the Hollanders have been no detriment to this country. Every man of them took the oath of allegiance to the United States soon after they came. Many of them enlisted in the army and fought bravely in the war or the rebellion. They learned long ago how to manage the rich Iowa soil and their magnificent farms with commodious buildings reach out miles and miles in every direction from Pella. They were quick to learn the language and ways of Americans, have engaged in many kinds of business and been successful. They have been elected to and faithfully filled offices of trust.

Even among those Pilgrims who had fled from religious persecution in Holland and were professed lovers of democracy, there were degrees in the social scale. The wealthy and educated and more refined were exclusive. They brought their ideas of social position with them. The social line between master and servant, or employer and employed, was much more marked than with Americans of this new western country. A young lady who belonged to a family of "upper ten" Hollanders once said to me: "I never worked in Holland for it was considered disgraceful there for a lady to work, but in America I find it is thought to be disgraceful for a lady not to work."

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Semira A. Phillips, Mahaska County - Reminiscences, (Oskaloosa: Herald Print, 1900), pp. 239-243.



## Chapter IX

# History of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church<sup>1</sup>

The small Holland settlement of Pella, begun in 1847 by the Rev. H. Scholte, had been growing for almost half a century so that land was becoming more difficult to obtain west of the Skunk River. Consequently the settlers who continued to come to Iowa began purchasing land in the territory which was then known as "over the river".

The result of this movement among the Hollanders soon made itself evident in the spiritual needs and desires of the people, so that the thought of organizing a new congregation was being considered seriously as early as the year 1893. This desire was further stimulated because of the distance to Pella, which in those days had to be made by means of the horse and buggy and often with great difficulty because of road conditions.

Evidence that these settlers "over the river" not only felt the need of a place of worship nearer at hand, but were also determined to act according to the best interest of their spiritual welfare, was seen in that as early as 1893 they called religious meetings in a schoolhouse about five miles northeast of Peoria.\*

Rev. C. Bode, an old veteran on the Home Mission field, was the first to preach at these meetings. This neighborhood northeast of Peoria was, however, not deemed desirable as a permanent site for a church and it was thought best to choose Peoria as the location.

In the fall of the year 1893 a meeting was held in the Peoria townhall for the purpose of organizing a new congregation.

At this meeting representatives of both the Reformed and Christian Reformed denominations were present. The Rev. R. Joldersma of Orange City, Iowa, represented the Reformed Church, and the Rev. J. Manni of the Pella Christian Reformed Church represented the Christian Reformed denomination.

It seemed as though the group which gathered here was minded to establish a congregation which should affiliate with the Reformed denomination. However this plan did not materialize since the debate which ensued between the Revs. Joldersma and Manni soon convinced the people assembled here that it would be best to organize and seek affiliation with the Christian Reformed denomination.

After this meeting different ministers from the Christian Reformed Denomination began to labor among the Holland people around Peoria. The efforts of the Revs. Breen, Manni, Vander Werp and Smitter were blest so that a small group of families requested Classis Iowa, meeting in spring session of 1894, to organize a congregation in Peoria. This request was granted and the Revs. J. Mannic E. Breen and Elder Overbergen were appointed as a committee by the Classis to carry out the decisions made.

\*This and the following quotes are taken from the Fiftieth Anniversary Booklet of the Peoria Chr. Ref. Church, 1944.



This committee met with the petitioners on the 11th day of April, 1894, in the township hall of Peoria. After this meeting had been opened by singing and prayer, the Rev. E. Breen delivered a sermon based upon Psalm 144:3,4. Following this message from God's Word, the people present went over to the actual organization of a new congregation. Seventeen families presented their letters; seven were from the Christian Reformed denomination and ten from the Reformed denomination. There were also twelve individuals present who expressed their desire to affiliate with the new organization. After hearing the confession of these individuals, they were also accepted as members of the newly organized church.

The following are the names of the families who, with their children, composed the original membership of the church.

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Van Gorp and seven children.

Mr. and Mrs. Pieter Rus and seven children.

Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Kloosterman and eight children.

Mr. and Mrs. Andries Geertsma and seven children.

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Rus and one child.

Mr. and Mrs. Johannes Zwank and four children.

Mr. and Mrs. Stoffel Grootnibbelink and three children.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Engbers and six children.

Mr. and Mrs. Rijk Van Heukelom and four children.

Mr. and Mrs. Arie Kool and one child.

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Brouwer and two children.

Mr. and Mrs. Jan Brouwer.

Mr. and Mrs. Arie De Jong and three children.

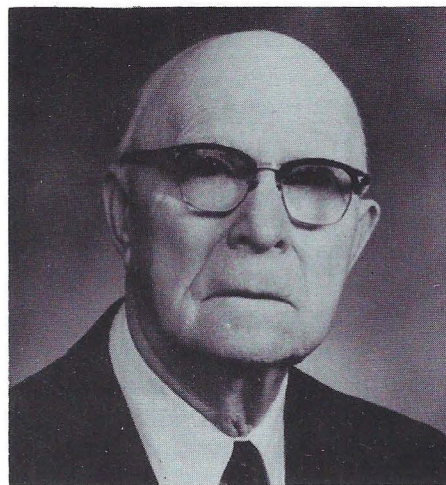
Mr. and Mrs. Dries Brouwer.

Mr. and Mrs. Pieter Zwank and five children.

The first consistory members chosen were elders: F. Grootnibbelink, R. Van Heukelom and C. Van Gorp; three dea-

cons: P. Rus, C. Kloosterman, and S. Grootnibbelink.

The congregation took to itself the name of the Holland Christian Reformed Church of Peoria, Iowa.



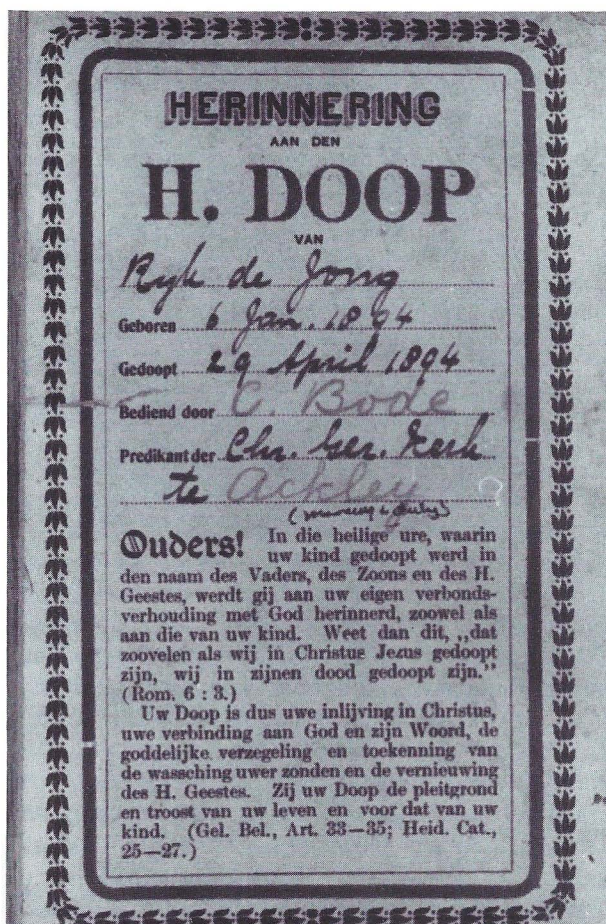
Rev. Richard De Jong, first child baptized in the newly organized church. A thank you to Rev. De Jong for many details of "the early days."

Rev. Richard De Jong was the first child baptized in the newly organized Holland Christian Reformed Church of Peoria, Iowa. Richard was born Jan. 6, 1894. The church was organized April 11, 1894. He was baptized on April 29, 1894, by Rev. C. Bode, a missionary on the Home Mission field, from Ackley, Iowa. The first pastor was ordained on Nov. 1, 1894.

During the early part of 1894, even before the organizational date, efforts were put forth to obtain a suitable place of worship in either the Christian or the Methodist Churches of Peoria. One of these American churches could be rented for the afternoon services but in the forenoon the Town Hall was available. These efforts of renting a church did not prove entirely satisfactory. Rev. A. J. Brink wrote, "The Americans, ever ready to be accommodating (?) were not always ready to have the key of the door handy, so that sometimes the key had to be fetched from Z when it was expected at A's house."<sup>2</sup> Efforts were also made in May of 1894, to meet in the Peoria Public School, but they could not get a positive response. Since these efforts failed, the congregation continued to meet in the township hall.

Efforts to obtain the first pastor were made on May 21, 1894, when a call was extended to the Rev. J. Groen of Zeeland,





Baptismal Certificate of Rev. Richard De Jong, 1894.

REMINDER  
Of  
The Holy Baptism  
of  
Richard (Rijk) De Jong  
Born: January 6, 1894  
Baptized April 29, 1894  
Administered By C. Bode  
Pastor Of The Chr. Ref. Church  
Of Ackley

Parents:

In this sacred hour, in which your child was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, you were reminded of your own Covenant Relationship with God, as well as that of your child. Know this, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death. Rom. 6:3

Your baptism is therefore your ingrafting in Christ, your pledge to God and His Word, the divine seal of the washing away of your sins and your renewal through the Holy Spirit.

May your baptism be the basis of your pleading and source of comfort in your life and that of your child.  
(Gel. Bel., Art. 33-35; Heid. Cat. 25-27)

Baptismal certificate translated into English.

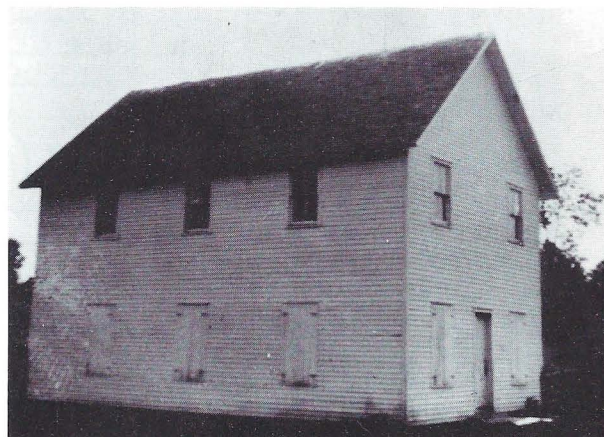
Michigan. The Rev. Groen, however, could not see his way clear to come to Peoria as its first pastor.

While waiting for an answer to the call extended, the consistory continued to look for a suitable place of worship and finally came to the conclusion that the only advisable thing to do was to seek a location and build a church. Thus it was decided to purchase two acres of ground on the north side of the village of Peoria for the price of one hundred and eighty-five dollars. These grounds are still the site of the church property.

The Oskaloosa Weekly Herald of June 7, 1894, reported, "The Dutch have purchased of Martin Sheue two acres of land paying \$185 for it. They intend to erect a Chr. Reformed Church."

Soon plans for a church building and parsonage were drawn by William Van Wijk, a skilled crafts-

man. He was a pastor of the Sioux Center Chr. Reformed Church. Financial times were difficult in 1894, as a depression existed in the country. To make matters more difficult, the year 1894 was



Peoria Town Hall where the Christian Reformed Church was organized and where the congregation first met.



also a year of severe drought so that the harvest was very poor. In spite of the adversity, the congregation forged ahead by faith and determination.<sup>3</sup>

On the tenth of July, 1894, a decision was made at the congregational meeting to erect a church building thirty-six feet long and thirty-two feet wide with a seating capacity of one-hundred and sixty. The pulpit was to be placed on the east side of the auditorium. A smaller room was to be built against the main building and was generally known, in those days, as "De Koffie-Kamer" (The coffee room). It was attached to the east side of the church.

It was further decided at this meeting to erect a parsonage south of the church building. This home still stands and serves as the residence of the Christian School principal.

For the protection of the horses, which brought the people to church, stalls were built and were rented for four dollars per year.

The first call was extended to Rev. J. Groen. The call was declined. A new trio was made and from it candidate S. Broekstra, who had labored among the Peoria people during the summer months, and had given good satisfaction, was called. That his work had been appreciated was evident from the fact that when the call was extended every ballot had been in his favor.

On November 1, 1894, the first pastor was ordained and preached his inaugural sermon.

The little congregation was indeed successful from the start, having church, parsonage and pastor about seven months after the organization. By December of 1894, the church and parsonage were completed at a cost of about \$2,200.<sup>4</sup>

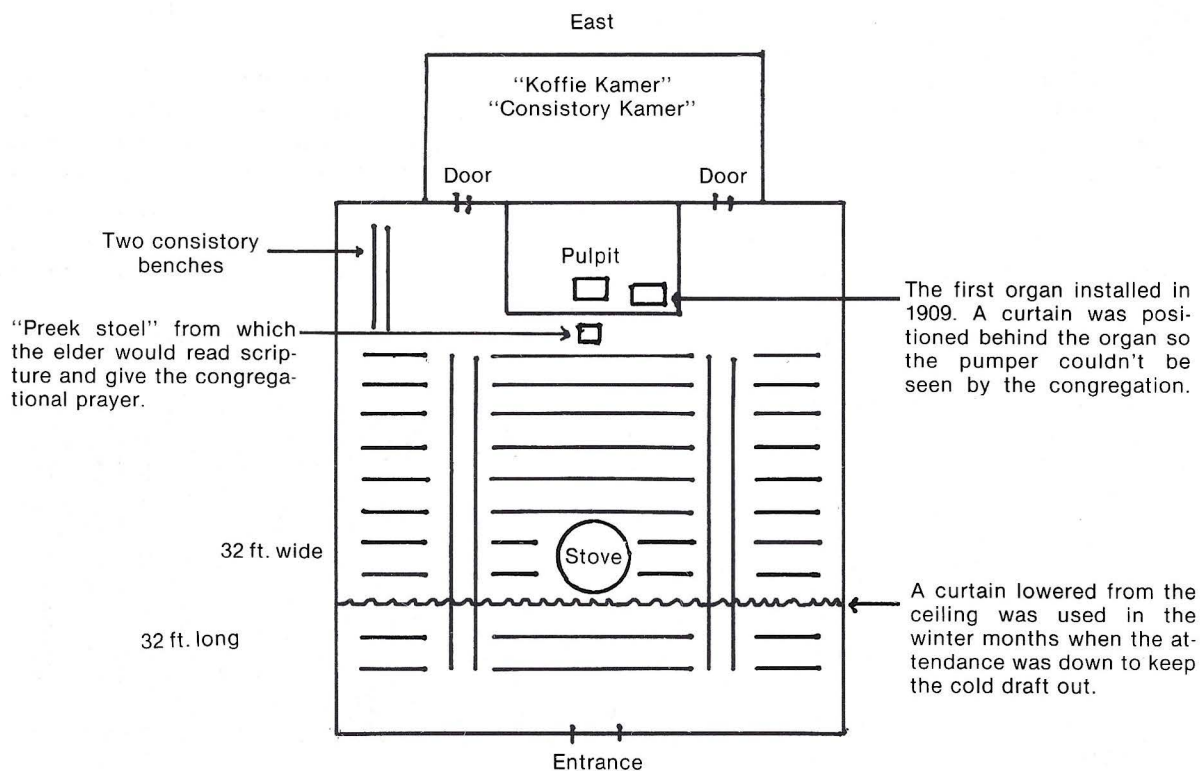


Diagram of the interior of the first church as completed in December, 1894 (36 ft. long, 32 ft. wide, 16 ft. high). There was no basement. In 1902 the church underwent its first expansion by adding 20 ft. on the west side. In 1911 the church underwent its second expansion by adding on to the north side. The pulpit was placed on the south and the belfry was added.





Rev. S. Broekstra  
First pastor 1894-1897

It was customary for the men to sit on the north side and the women on the south side. Families with children sat in the middle pews.

The consistory would meet in the parsonage prior to the service, then walk in the west door and take their seat in the two consistory benches. Arie De Jong customarily sat in the front row as he was the "voor singer."

The "Koffie-Kamer" or "Consistory Kamer" was the room where the consistory held their meetings. On Sundays, the services were held in the morning and in the afternoon. As electricity was an unknown, those people traveling from the country would bring their dinner along (usually sandwiches) and eat in the "Koffie-Kamer". Coffee would be made and served.

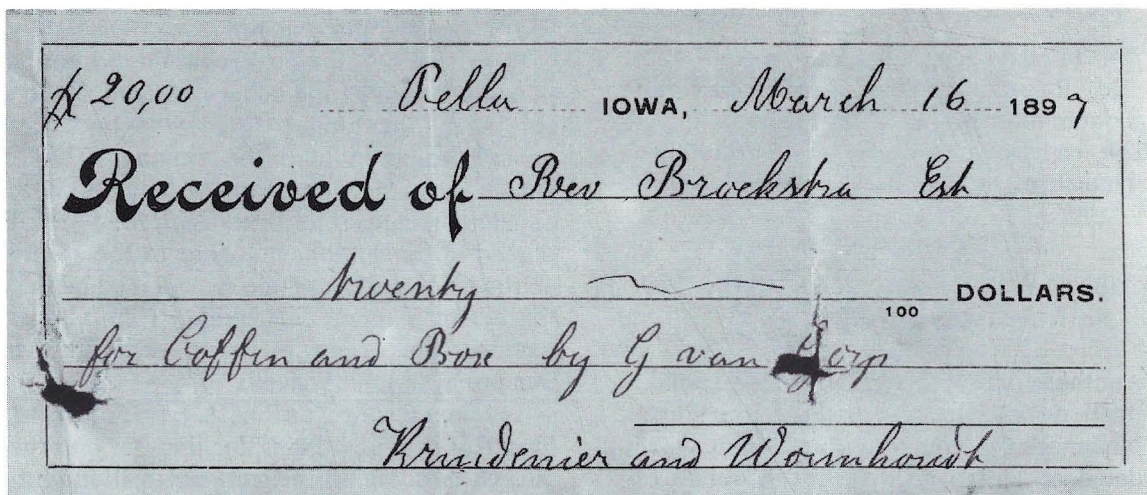
The congregation having apparently weathered the storms of early infancy was now developing and matters were beginning to follow a peaceful course, when suddenly it was shocked and cast into deep sorrow through the death of its first pastor on March 4, 1897. The Rev. S. Broekstra had been indisposed but was believed to be recuperating when conditions suddenly turned for the worse and in a few days he was removed from this life. The loss sustained was keenly felt since the pastor had been faithful in the preaching of the Word.

His illness was believed to be "Kramp in de maag" (appendicitis).

He served the congregation for the short period of two and one-half years and attained the age of forty-five years. His body is buried in the Oakwood Cemetery in Pella. He is the only pastor of the Peoria Chr. Ref. Church to have died while serving in Peoria and is the only one to have been buried in the area.

Mrs. Broekstra continued to live in Peoria for a number of years after the death of her husband. She lived for some time in the home later occupied by Tabe Vander Veen where she boarded some Christian school teachers. Rev. and Mrs. Broekstra's daughter, Tena, later married Aletinus Rus, a "son" of Peoria who went into the Christian ministry.

Rev. G. Westenberg was the next pastor serving



Received of Rev. Broekstra, Estate, March 16, 1897. Twenty dollars for coffin and box by Gerrit Van Gorp.  
Krudenier and Wormhoudt





Tombstone of Rev. S. Broekstra, Oakwood Cemetery, Pella.

The inscription on the stone is very weathered.

"Hier Rust"

Here Rest

"REV. S. BROEKSTRA"

"Geb (Geboren) Te Burum"

Born At Burum, (Friesland)

"Aug. 23, 1851"

"Overl (overladen) Te Peoria"

Died At Peoria

"4 Mar. 1897 45 yrs., 7 mo., 1 d."

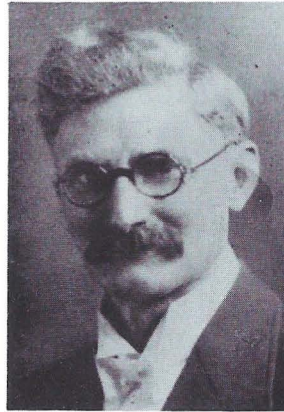
"Ps. 112:6"

"De Rechtvaardige zal in eeuwige  
gedachtenig zijn."

The righteous shall be in everlasting  
remembrance.

from 1897-1901. He was followed by Rev. P. Jonker Sr. from 1901-1907.

Another period of growth manifested itself during the pastorate of the Rev. Jonker so that on May 5, 1902, it was decided to enlarge the church building by adding twenty feet to the west side. On September the seventh the dedicatory service of the enlarged church



Rev. G. Westenberg  
1897-1901



Rev. P. Jonker, Sr.  
1901-1907

edifice took place. Just four months elapsed from the time the decision was taken to the time the new building was ready for use.

At a congregational meeting held on January 26, 1904, it was decided to sell the "Koffie-Kamer" to Mr. Kloosterman and purchase half of the old Peoria creamery, move it to the church grounds, remodel it and use it as a consistory room and "Koffie-Kamer".

In 1909, Mr. John Dylhoff, the first teacher in the newly built Christian School, painted a large picture or mural on the east wall of the auditorium. It was a scenic picture of a lake with trees and a fence. The painting was done in exchange for a camera which the consistory agreed to buy for him for \$35. Mr. Dylhoff also agreed to play the organ in church free of charge for two years. He was the teacher from 1908-1911.

Prior to 1909, the congregation did not have a piano or organ so the congregational singing was led by a "voorzinger" (one who had a strong enough voice to lead the singing). The "voorzinger" was usually Arie De Jong. In 1909, the church purchased its first organ for \$315. It was placed in the southeast corner of the auditorium on the platform. A curtain was placed behind it so the organ pumper was hidden from view as he pumped the organ by hand. The first organ pumper was John Bosveld.

The next pastor was Rev. A. J. Brink (1908-1911). In 1911 it was again decided to enlarge the church building since the congregation had once more outgrown its building. This time it was decided to add to the north side of the church and place the pulpit on the south side of the audi-





Rev. A. J. Brink  
1908-1911



Rev. H. Bultema  
1912-1916

torium. The belfry was also added. During the building of this addition a hole was excavated under the pulpit area and a furnace installed. The heating of the church with this furnace was quite unsatisfactory as the heat would not circulate.

Rev. H. Bultema served as pastor from 1912-1916. In May, 1914, the machine age struck Peoria. It was then that Rev. Bultema reported the fact that the ponies used by the pastor were old and could no longer serve acceptably. The ponies were disposed of and the more modern means of conveyance, the automobile, was introduced.

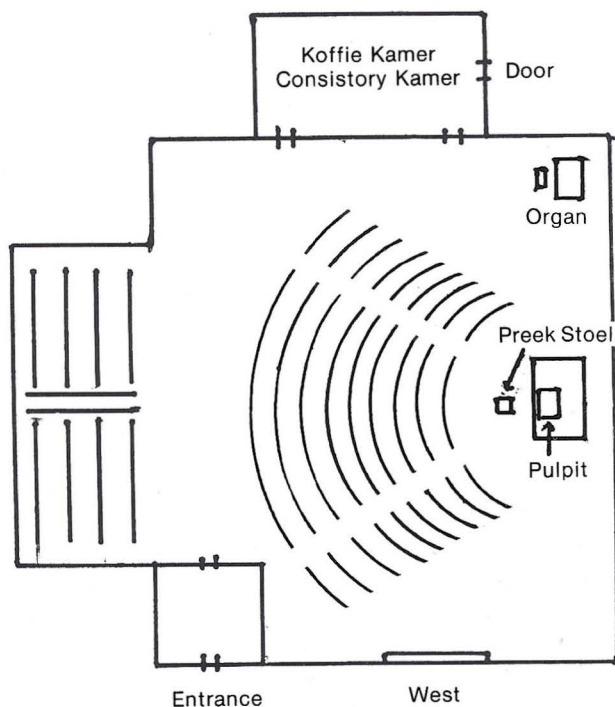
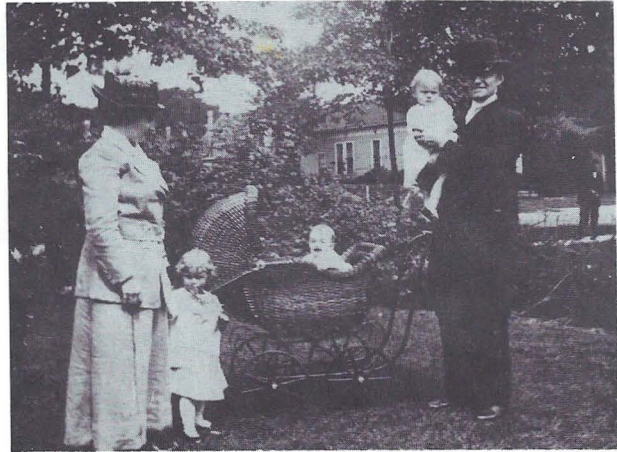


Diagram of the interior of the Church as expanded in 1911. The auditorium was extended out to the north and the pulpit placed on the south.



Rev. H. Bultema and family.

The sixth pastorate was that of Rev. J. J. Weersing who served one year and nine months (1916-1918). This was a short and stormy ministry.

Rev. Weersing encouraged the building of a new parsonage, stating that his wife needed a warmer place to live. Though the congregation was not entirely united on the project, the old parsonage was moved south to the adjacent lot where it served as the teacherage. To this date it still serves in this capacity.

On December 15, 1916, the new, large parsonage, which had been built and was nearly ready for occupancy, caught fire due to an overheated furnace, and was completely destroyed. The carpenters had arrived early that morning, fired the furnace, then left for breakfast at the Gerrit Van Der Hart home. While there, the building went up in flames. The loss was thirty-five hundred dollars.



Rev. J. J. Weersing  
1916-1918





Old Church, Parsonage and School House.

### PEORIA PARSONAGE BURNED

The new parsonage being erected at Peoria for Reverend Weersing, of the Christian Reformed church, was burned to the ground Friday morning, entailing a loss of several thousand dollars. The building was a large dwelling, not yet completed and was unoccupied. It was being plastered and a furnace fire was being maintained for drying purposes. The fire started about 7:00 o'clock from unknown causes. The loss is estimated at \$3,500, and we understand there was no insurance. At a congregational meeting, it was decided to rebuild on the same site, and the same building committee was re-appointed. The loss is a heavy one to the church, but they are going right to work to pay off their indebtedness and to rebuild the parsonage. A meeting will be held January 1st at which time it is expected a report will be made concerning plans and specifications for the new house.

Within two weeks the sum of four thousand, one hundred dollars had been collected for a new building. The new parsonage was rebuilt on a foundation inside the previous one which made for a slightly smaller building.

The years 1917, and 1918, were difficult as our country became involved in World War I. Rev. J. J. Weersing became a controversial figure during that time. On Thursday evening, June 13, 1918, before midnight, the Peoria Christian School was



Ladies Aid Sale, summer 1917. Tone Roose, Auctioneer. Rev. Weersing, center.



The new parsonage built in 1917.

set on fire. By the next morning both the school and the church were burned to the ground. Only heroic efforts by those pouring buckets of water on the roof of the parsonage kept it from also being destroyed. The history of the conflict years 1917, 1918, and 1919, will be covered in a following chapter.

Rev. P. Van Dyk served as pastor from 1919-1921.

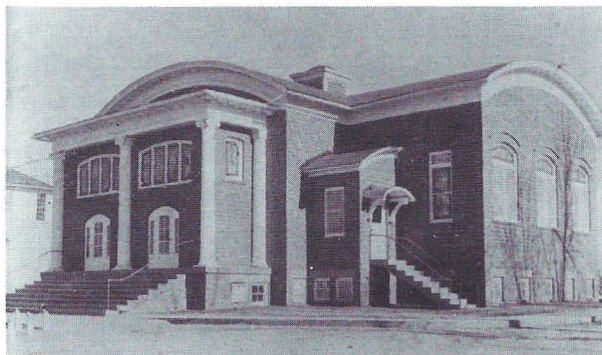
Rev. D. H. Krominga served as pastor from 1922-1926.

Rev. M. Vander Werp served as pastor from 1928-1932.

During 1929, a used pipe organ was purchased and installed which was located in the northwest corner of the church auditorium. It served until 1952, when the present organ was imported from Holland.

Rev. J. Weidenaar served as pastor from 1932-1936.

During Rev. Weidenaar's ministry times were trying, since the country was in the grip of a severe economic and financial depression. To make matters more diffi-



The Peoria Christian Reformed Church as built in 1919.



cult the year 1934, just as the year 1894, brought with it a severe drought.

Rev. D. J. Hoitenga served as pastor from 1937-1943. He left the congregation and entered the chaplaincy in the armed forces during World War II, where he served as a chaplain.

Subsequent pastors:

Rev. Raymond Haan	1943-1945
Rev. John A. Mulder	1946-1950
Rev. Henry Verduin	1953-1959
Rev. Douglas Vander Waal	1959-1962
Rev. Donald J. Van Beek	1962-1966
Rev. Donald J. Drost	1968-1973
Rev. Peter Van Druenen	1973-1982
Rev. Ronald Bouwkamp	1983-



Peoria Choral Society at the Mahaska Co. Farm, summer 1957. James Dahm, Director.



Peoria Girls Society gathering, Henry and Nellie Nibbelink home, summer 1938.

Front row: Cornelia Van Wyngarden, Wilma Van Wyk, Charlotte De Jong, Christina Dahm, Matilda Jonker, Nellie (Blom) Nibbelink, Cornelia De Jong.

Back row: Cora Jonker, unidentified, Stella

Dahm, Jeanette Roose, Wilma Roose, Tena Van Wyngarden, Hilda Van Der Hart, Carolyn Stursma, Nellie Van Wyk, Katherine Van Der Linden, Jennie Van Der Hart, Louise Van Der Hart, Ruth Deur, Johanna Blom, Nellie Van Der Hart.

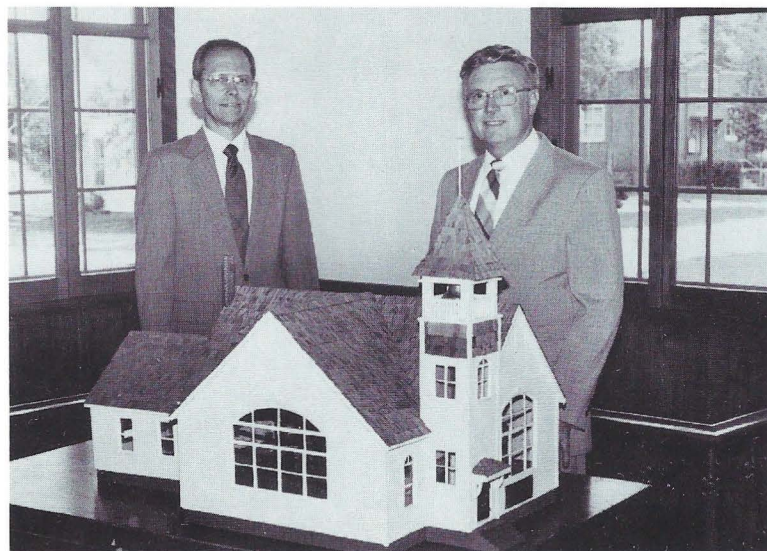
(Picture complements of Nellie Nibbelink.)





Wintertime shivaree for Gerrit and Cornelia Bandstra who were married in December, 1942. The horse-drawn sled traveled from Peoria to the Bandstra home in January, 1943, with the Peoria Girls Society making lots of noise and having lots of fun in the surprise visit to the newlyweds. Back row (standing): Cornelia (Van Wyngarden) Bandstra, Anna (Vos) Roose, Margaret (Vos) Van Haaften,

Hilda Spoelstra, Janice (DeJong) Brodsky, Gretta (Nieuwsma) Van Wyk, Stella (Dahm) Pothoven, Christine (Dahm) Van Ee, Catherine (Pothoven) Van Wyk. Front row (seated): Anna Vander Molen, Carolyn (Stursma) Bokhoven, Tena Mae (Van Wyngarden) Bandstra, Jennie (Vander Linden) Wilting, Erma (Vander Hart) Van Wyngarden, Freda (Pothoven) Bokhoven.



Replica of the Peoria Church as it was destroyed by arson in 1918. Built in 1988 by Robert Van Ryswyk, upper right. Upper left, James Dahm.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Fiftieth Anniversary of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church, 1944.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. A. J. Brink, "Peoria, Iowa, Chr. Ref. Church," The Banner, November 4, 1909.

<sup>3</sup>Rev. A. J. Brink.

<sup>4</sup>Rev. A. J. Brink.



## Chapter X

# History of the Peoria Christian School

The following account is taken from the Fiftieth Anniversary Booklet of the Peoria Christian School, August 28, 1957.<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1904, when our congregation was enjoying the pastorate of Rev. Peter Jonker Sr., that the Consistory decided to start a summer school in the Holland language for the months of July and August.\* This school was to be conducted in a strictly Christian way with prayer and Bible lesson, and teaching the children to read and write in the Holland language. Student A. J. Rus was employed as the teacher. At the end of the term a program was given by the pupils in the Holland language. This program made a tremendous impression on the parents who were amazed at the progress made by the children in reading and writing and in reciting Bible history.

It was then and there decided to continue this summer school the next year even though it was not a strictly parental school. It was sponsored by the Consistory and supported by the congregation.

Some twenty children attended this summer school; they were mostly Vander Harts, Stursmas, De Jongs and Pot-hovens. Mr. A. J. Rus taught in the old Consistory room, which was part of the defunct Peoria Creamery building. After the second year of teaching this school Mr. Rus was ready for practice preaching during the summer and thus ended his career as teacher at Peoria. Another student, Peter Jonker, Jr., a son of our pastor, was engaged to teach during the summer of 1906.

Already in 1905 voices were raised in favor of starting a Christian Day School. Several meetings were held at which the pros and cons were discussed. Some obstacles were the long, cold winters, the great distances to be traveled, the sacrifices involved. But our pastor was determined in his leadership and would not give up. He talked about it and preached about it and insisted "if there is a will, there is a way." He insisted on organizing a school society and kept working. The first meeting was called. And, although only ten men were present, a school society was organized. Meetings were held regularly and more and more added their names to the membership roll.

The last year of the summer school was 1906. More and more people got to see the necessity of a Christian Day School. Plans and arrangements were made so that this was realized in September, 1907.\*\* The Consistory Room then called "Koffie Kamer," was to be the school room. But teachers were hard to get at that time. At the end of July no teacher had yet been secured. It was disappointing and it seemed as if all efforts should fail. Many harsh words and even threats were heard from persons outside our little circle as our community at that time was quite heavily populated

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\*The congregation decided on March 16, 1904, to have "Holland School" for two months during the summer of that year.

\*\*The organizational meeting was on Aug. 28, 1907 (Christian Home and School Magazine, Oct. 1932).



with Americans not of Dutch blood, who said that, "if you start something like that, you will suffer!" Even in our own group many disapproved of the project.

In the meantime the beginning was made harder by the fact that our pastor received and accepted a call to New Jersey. This clouded the otherwise bright prospects for the beginning of the school. The Board, consisting of Godert Vander Hart, president, Arie De Jong, treasurer, Coen Stursma, secretary, J. G. Van Gorp, controller, and D. W. Van Gorp, vicar, begged the pastor to stay at least until the school could open its doors. Rev. Jonker agreed to do this. He asked for an extension of time and postponed his departure until October.

In the meantime the Board contacted a former minister of Peoria, the Rev. Gerrit Westenberg of Passaic, New Jersey, concerning a teacher there who wished to come to the west. As a result Mr. Douwe Veltman was appointed to be our first Christian School teacher at a salary

of \$450 for the nine months of teaching. Forty children were enrolled this first year. The going was difficult many times; weather and road conditions often resulted in poor attendance. Mr. Veltman stayed but a year and returned to New Jersey. The second year was a troubled one. A Mr. Gouda was dismissed because his teaching was judged to be in conflict with Reformed Doctrine. Miss Elizabeth Kempkes was appointed and stepped in to fill out the year.

In 1908 it was decided to build a school building. A plot of land was bought from J. G. Van Gorp, north of the church. The same year a one room school was built and ready for occupancy by September 1910.

John Dylhoff of Patterson, New Jersey, was our first teacher in the new school building having come in 1908 and leaving in 1911. All this time the Holland language was taught a day a week, on Fridays. In September 1911, Mr. Richard Drost became the Principal and at the



Peoria Christian School, 1909. John Dylhoff, teacher.





Peoria Christian School about 1912. Richard Drost, principal (back row). Front row, left to right: Peter De Jong, Albert Nibbelink, Gerrit Pothoven, Gerrit Vander Molen, John Roose, John Van Gorp, Bert Engbers, Will Roose, Gerrit De Jong, Neal Engbers, Steve Nibbelink, C. Boerefyn, P. Boerefyn, C. Vander Hart. Second row: Minnie Boerefyn, Jennie Boerefyn, Dena Bennink, Coba Stursma, Lizza Samen, Minnie De Jong, Minnie Samen, Gertrude Bennink, Ellie Vander Molen, Minnie Engbers, Rina Engbers. Third row: Jake De Jong, Tom Vander Hart, Walter Vander Hart, Otto Pothoven, Bill Vander Hart, Gerrit Van Gorp, Rene Van Gorp, Effie Stursma, Minnie Kloosterman, Minnie Vos, Anna Vander Molen, Anna Stursma, Rachel Vander Molen, Tena Stursma, Sadie Van Gorp, Jeannette Vos, Winnie Engbers, Labiena Van Andel. A few are unidentified.

end of that year the teaching of the Holland language was discontinued. By the year 1912 the number of children attending the school had risen to 84 and the one large room was converted into a two-room school. Mr. Frank Kuiper was appointed as a second teacher.



Mr. Hietbrink, principal.

In 1915 Frank Kuiper became the principal, followed by James Hietbrink in 1917. Hietbrink's career was short and tragic, being caught in the conflicts of 1917 and 1918. As our nation became involved in the first World War (April 7, 1917), the school was closed for a short period of time as threats were made to burn down the school. In the late evening hours of June 13, 1918, the threat of



Ashes after the fire.

burning the school was actually carried out and both the school and the church were quickly reduced to ashes.

The result was that we had no school for two years. But with faith in God and with great courage, a new school was built in the school year 1919-1920. Mr. Richard Drost again became our principal. Years later when Mr. Hietbrink visited Peoria and saw the new school he declared, "There stands a monument of God's faithfulness."

The history of this rebuilding and opening of the school is as follows:

At a meeting of the society held September 3, 1919, the matter of rebuilding the



school was discussed. No decision was made in regard to rebuilding. It was decided to meet again in two months and to continue the collection of school funds even while there was no school.

January 13, 1920: At this meeting it was unanimously decided to build a new school. A committee was appointed to investigate as to place and cost, and was to report at a later meeting held March 6, 1920. They reported that a new school would cost about \$12,000, not including furnace and seats. This would be a four room school house built on the church and school grounds. A building committee was appointed: B. Vander Molen, J. Pothoven, Jacob Dahm Sr., J. Rus and M. Vander Hart.

Meeting March 10, 1920: Pledges were made to the amount of \$4,300 and efforts were put forth to have the school ready for use by September 1 of that same year.

The new Peoria Christian School was opened on September 20, 1920. The difficulties encountered through the years are recorded in the 50th Anniversary Booklet published August 28, 1957.

The following reveals some of the Board matters discussed and difficulties encountered throughout the years of the depression 1931-1938.

Both teachers were again appointed for 1933-1934. Mr. Deur accepted, but Miss Ella declined. Martha Vos was later appointed for \$30 a month for nine months. Both teachers were again reappointed for 1934-1935, and also accepted.

From the beginning of the "depression" and through the years that followed, the main problem that confronted the school board and the Society was of a financial nature. In the many Board and Society meetings that were held in the course of these years, the greatest problem was being short of money. To keep the school going in such times as this required parent and teacher alike. From 1931 through 1938, some of the most trying years, the school enjoyed the services of Mr. Geo. J. Deur as principal. Serving with him as teacher in '35 and '36 was Miss Martha Vos. Salaries that were paid to these two were \$90.00 and

\$40.00 per month respectively, and this salary was not always met.

In the course of the school year 1936 the school was wired for electric lights. This was done in part by donated labor and much doubt was raised as to the reliability of the work. The light company would not hook on to the school directly as the wiring was not done in the prescribed form and method. To overcome this, the wires were hooked on to the church.

In 1943 bus transportation was inaugurated. This was indeed a step forward, though the start was small and the impact of the enlarged enrollment that it brought, was felt in the school. The first busses were small, used panel trucks, purchased very economically by a committee of ten persons. Mr. John Vos and Mr. John A. De Jong were the first drivers. During this year some 90 pupils were enrolled.

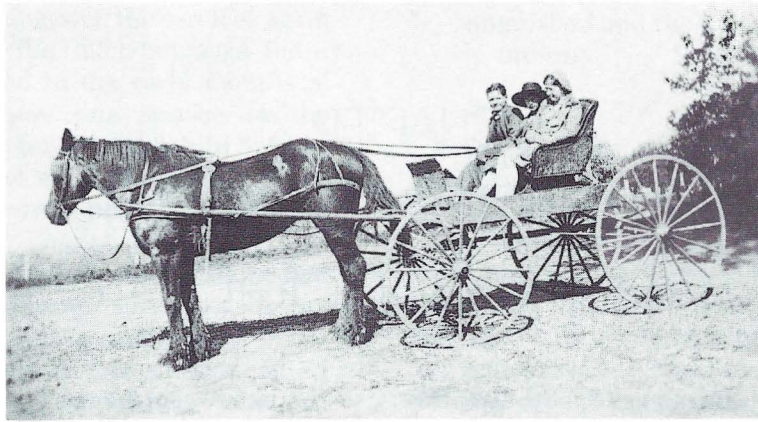
The year 1951-1952 showed an increase in enrollment, 105 pupils being enrolled. During the summer months of '52 this school building was extended 10 feet to the north because all the rooms were too crowded. This cost \$6000 and the money was borrowed to be paid in 5 years.

The Fiftieth anniversary of the Peoria Christian School was celebrated August 28, 1957, with an



School cleaning time, 1943. L-R: John A. Roose, Wiebe De Vries, John Van Gorp, Mrs. Wiebe De Vries, Dena Van Gorp, Mrs. Lou Vander Molen, Tena Stursma, Mrs. John A. Roose, Coen Stursma, Lou Vander Molen, Gerrit A. De Jong, Jake Stursma, Bert Swank, Mrs. Bert Swank, Henry Dahm, Ronnie Swank-sitting.





School bus ride 1932 style to the Peoria Christian School. Left to right: Martin Vos, Wilma Roose and Anna (Vos) Roose.

enrollment of 106 pupils. The highest enrollment was reached in 1962-63 with 131 pupils. The enrollment in 1980-1981 was 63 pupils.

In 1976-77 a recreation center was built. Many hours were spent in planning, collecting donations and pledges as well as recruiting workers to get the job done. The center houses a basketball court and kitchen. It serves the students of the Peoria Christian School as well as the church and community when needed.

On March 16, 1977, the public could admire the finished building when the open house was held.

In 1983 it was decided to erect a new school building. Volunteers from the community helped to tear down the old building the week following summer dismissal and the new building was ready for occupancy by Thanksgiving of the same year. During the few months the school was without a building, the Recreation Center and the church basement served as classrooms for the students.



Peoria Christian School, 1920-1983.

The present school has an enrollment of 62. The school has many programs which make it competitive with other area schools.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Fiftieth Anniversary of the Peoria Christian School, Aug., 1957.



## CHAPTER XI

# A Reign of Terror - "The Hollander Fires"

As early as 1871, the names of the property owners in Richland Township began to change from the American names to the Dutch names. The Hollanders had arrived in Pella in 1847 under the leadership of Rev. H. P. Scholte. This settlement gradually increased in numbers and moved out in all directions until the South Skunk River was crossed in Mahaska County. Along with this change of names came a people with a culture all their own.

What were the underlying causes for the disharmony, unrest, hatred, threats, arson and attempted murder that occurred in the Peoria, New Sharon and Sully areas during a period of fifteen months and in an area with a diameter of twenty-five miles?

### Jealousy Between the Two Cultures

The Hollanders were a closely knit, religious, hard-working people who stayed together and worked together. They didn't make a great effort to mingle with the American community. Their thriftiness and hard-working habits permeated their lives, insomuch that they generally succeeded in business and farming. Many of them had large families. Ten children were not uncommon. This was considered an asset, especially on the farms because the growing children could assist in the work of the farming operations. The Hollanders moving in from south and west of the Skunk River were willing to pay premium prices for the land, and could succeed in doing so because of their thriftiness, hard-working habits and the availability of family help.

Van Hinte wrote in 1928 that there had been friction between the Americans and the Netherlanders already for many years prior to World War I. The general complaint of the American farmers was that the Hollanders caused land prices to escalate; they paid prices that the American farmers could not possibly afford and

so the latter were forced to move.<sup>1</sup>

The situation became the most polarized, however, in the Peoria area which the Dutch had "conquered." "In the eyes of the Americans there were too many Hollanders."<sup>2</sup>

### Clannishness of the Hollanders

Relations were further aggravated because it was keenly felt that the Dutch held themselves somewhat aloof. This came to expression in a number of ways. Handicapped by a lack of fluency in the English language, they tended to be clannish. Perhaps the Dutch immigrants from Holland and their children were bent on making their colony a "Holland" in America rather than to become Americans. Evidence of this tendency comes from the fact that the Dutch language remained "the language" for many years.

The 50th Anniversary Booklet of the History of the Peoria Christian Grade School states that when the Christian School was being organized in 1904, one of the purposes, in addition to the Christian instruction, was to "...teach the children to read and write in the Dutch language."

The church also had problems in making the transition from the Dutch to the English language. The following shows how slowly the change came.<sup>3</sup>

1894 From the organizational meeting in 1894, and the years to follow, both services were held in the Dutch language.

1917 It was decided to have one evening service in the English language once every month.

1918 Due to the war, all services were to be held in the English language. "This created a hardship among our people since many had little knowledge of the English language."



- 1919 The war being over, the services again returned to the Dutch language. But it was decided in the early months of 1919, to have one service in the English language on the third Sunday afternoon of each month.
- 1930 A second service per month would be held in the English language.
- 1933 "Progress in Americanization had been developing systematically so that a third service each month in the English language was introduced on Thanksgiving Day of 1933."
- 1942 "Indications of rapid maturity in the use of the English language was made evident when, in February of 1942, it was decided to discontinue the Dutch language entirely in the worship services. This decision however seemed a bit premature and in June of the same year the congregation considered it best to have two Dutch services each month."
- 1944 Dutch services were finally discontinued.

This persistent clinging to the Dutch language was also reflected in their daily lives. An older non-Dutch area resident recalls,

We would be threshing grain and all the neighbors would be working together. Then came the noon dinner and the Dutch people would speak Dutch to each other, telling jokes and conversing. I would sit there, not understanding a word. I would wonder if they were talking about me and wonder if my work was unsatisfactory. It didn't create very good feelings.

Van Hinte writes that this aloofness also came to expression in the establishment of Christian Schools.

In Sully, Jasper County, at a school picnic in 1914 or 1915 the Dutch flag was flown over the schoolhouse and the people refused to comply with the mayor's request to fly the American flag next to it. The Hollanders seem to have been nettled by the attitude of the Americans, but they themselves also showed a lack of tact in this case. In 1918 the American farmers tried to burn down this "Dutch" school. However, the fire was ex-

tinguished and the damage was relatively minor.<sup>4</sup>

## Organization of the Peoria Christian School

The beginnings of the Christian School go back to March 16, 1904, when the congregation decided to have "Holland School" for two months of that year.<sup>5</sup> By September of 1907, the Christian Day School was organized with an enrollment of forty children. The consistory room of the church, then called the "Koffie Kamer" was the first school room.

However, people in the American community were not so thrilled. Undoubtedly they saw the organization of the Christian School as detrimental for the survival of the public school. Many harsh words and even threats were heard from persons outside the Dutch circle who said, "If you start something like that you will suffer!"

Rev. William De Jong recalls,

The Dutch speaking people despised the English speaking people as much as the English speaking people despised the Dutch speaking people. The kids would have fights on the way home from school ...the kids that went to the Public School and the kids that went to the Christian School. So they would dismiss the Christian School one-half hour earlier to avoid the conflicts.

## Tensions Mount

The conflicts between the American and Dutch-speaking people finally came to a climax during the years 1917, 1918 and 1919.

On April 7, 1917, our nation became involved in the First World War. Some of the American people of the community began to look upon the Hollanders as unpatriotic and even pro-German. This alleged inclination toward Germany or, even worse, an apparent lack of patriotism, were grounds for threats, even death threats against the Hollanders. Perhaps one reason was that the Hollanders retained their native language, a language which could be called similar or a "close cousin" to the German language. But it was also a known fact that the country of Holland remained neutral during World War I. "Had not Holland given shelter to the Kaiser?" was often asked.



As the American involvement in the war increased during the year 1917, the patriotic fervor also increased. Tensions mounted as articles appeared in the newspaper about the "unpatriotic Dutch people." The following appeared about November, 1917, probably in a Des Moines newspaper:

### SAY DUTCH REFUSE TO FLY FLAG OVER SCHOOL

J. F. Deems, food administrator, has received a letter from Pella, Marion-co, stating that in a Holland settlement in Richmond-twp, all the members of the First Dutch Reformed church refused to associate with American people.

The unpatriotic people have their own school, have broken up one American school, and three others will shortly be closed. They refused to raise the flag over the school house, to buy bonds, or to sign food pledges. The names of the minister and four of his congregation have been sent to H. J. Metcalfe, secretary of the state council of defense.

The printing of the above newsclipping brought a prompt response from a Pella citizen who quickly replied:

### LETTERS FROM READERS

Editor The News—In your issue of the News final edition of Nov. 7, you print that the Dutch refuse to fly the U.S. flag over schools. There are several grave errors in this letter from Pella.

First, there is no Richmond-twp in Marion-co. There is a Richland-twp in Mahaska-co in which the town or hamlet of Peoria is situated. There is a parochial school there under the auspices of the Christian Reformed Church (not the Dutch Reform Church).

Second, the so-called Dutch R. C., really the Reformed Church of America, (don't mistake this for the Reformed Church of the United States—Lutheran) are very loyal to the U. S. government and patriotic to a large degree, which is proved by the way they overbought Liberty Loan Bonds, both the first and second issues. Also, the large amount of funds collected for Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., and Liberty bonds.

Third, the two Christian Reformed Church pastors in Pella are loyal to the government, tho some of their congregations are anti-war on account of their religious views, something like the Menonites. This church raised \$6000 and has two spiritual minded men, one at Camp Dodge and one at Camp Cody, to see to the physical, moral and religious wellbeing of the boys in these camps, who were called

to the colors out of the C. R. C. families.

Fourth, the C. R. C. parochial school in Pella raises the U. S. flag every morning, and takes it down every evening, as requested by the U. S. government.

Fifth, as to their breaking up the public school in Peoria; this was because they believe God's word should be read in the school, and the religious families preferred to send their children to the parochial school, paying the extra funds for this, yet paying their share of the school taxes of Richland-twp.

Sixth. Quite a number of the members of the several C. R. churches in and around Pella are becoming reconciled to the fact that the U. S. in the war, and I doubt not others will do so too, as they are getting better posted about the absolute necessity of our country joining in this war.

I am neither a member of the C. R. Church, nor of the so-called Dutch Reformed Church. I am a reader of your paper, however, and am sure you desire to have the correct view, so that the bad name given to Pella and its immediate vicinity will be corrected.

My father was the founder of the Dutch colony coming here in 1847, with 1000 Hollanders. We have always been loyal to our adopted country, as the list of our dead soldiers in the war of the rebellion amply proves.

Very Respectfully Yours,  
H. P. SCHOLTE

Rev. Edward Huibregtse, then pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church of New Sharon, Iowa, when reflecting on the years past, wrote,<sup>6</sup>

The tension of the War years seemed to arise from purely local and personal sentiment, till it blossomed out into a statewide issue. Without any known legislative action it appeared in the form of a "Language Proclamation" by the then Governor William L. Harding; by it the use of any language but English (American) was prohibited in public, on the street, in private telephone conversations, and all religious services. The latter, especially, worked a hardship upon recent arrivals from foreign lands, who could not be edified nor given the comfort of faith except in their mother tongue. This was relieved somewhat by a later interpretation of the "law" permitting an exact translation of the service into the language of those concerned, immediately following the original service. All this was meant to



guard against disloyal or subversive opinions being expressed.

The feelings of the Dutch people were hurt! It was difficult for them to sing out of anything but the Dutch Psalm Book. Some pastors attempted to preach the sermon in English and then had it translated into Dutch. It seemed absurd to speak a language they could scarcely speak or understand.

As the conflict increased, the Hollanders found themselves spied upon. People of the community who would normally not attend the Peoria Church, or any church for that matter, would appear in the church service to observe if the Dutch language was being used.

Rev. William De Jong, then a lad of twelve years, recalls how one Sunday afternoon, for the afternoon worship service, a stranger came into church and sat in the church pew with the church elders. He had identified himself to the consistory as a secret service man and stated that he was there to observe the worship service. On this occasion Mr. Hietbrink, the Christian School Principal, was in charge of the service. As it proceeded, Mr. Hietbrink would speak in English and then translate the difficult words into Dutch. When the service was over the visitor assured the consistory that they were not doing anything illegal or unpatriotic.

The Holland people were warned not to speak any Dutch anywhere. Effie (Stursma) Dahm, then a clerk in the Peoria Store at age 17 remembers, "Individuals would come in the store periodically, stand around to observe if any Dutch was being spoken. You couldn't speak a word of Dutch in the store!"

The problem carried over to the telephone. All telephones were on a party line arrangement where neighbors were able to listen to other people conversing on the line. If Dutch was spoken, the offending party would find his mailbox painted yellow, or yellow paint was smeared on the barn. It became dangerous to speak Dutch! An elderly lady remembers, "We weren't supposed to talk Dutch on the telephone but we did it anyway!"

In 1917, James Hietbrink came to be the principal of the Peoria Christian School. Feelings were running high and the school more and more became the issue on which bitter hatred focused. Mr. Hietbrink was singled out for threatening and violence. One evening in May of 1918, as he walked home from the Peoria Store with a supply of groceries, a young man waylaid him from

behind, knocking him to the ground and inflicted upon him a brutal beating.

Soon after the beating of Hietbrink, the Christian School was closed for fear of destruction by fire. The Pella Chronicle of June 20, 1918 reported,

By order of the County Council of Defense, this school was ordered closed sometime ago, owing to the feeling existing. However, last week a representative of the State Department came down and permitted the school to reopen just for the week in order to permit the grades to be given out to the pupils.

In October, 1916, Rev. J. J. Weersing became the sixth minister of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church. Before entering the ministry, Weersing had entertained thoughts of becoming a lawyer and had received some legal training. Rev. Weersing was an influential person who was aggressive and straightforward. During the earlier part of his short ministry in Peoria he was against the U.S. involvement in the war. He was heard to have called War Bonds "blood money" and discouraged their purchase by saying that, "Every bond you buy, buys bullets."

Rev. Weersing used his earlier training to do whatever he could do legally to help the boys of his congregation avoid the draft. Having both a speaking and reading knowledge of the English language, he assisted the young men of his congregation in filling out their questionnaires to obtain a deferred status. Predictably his actions led to charges of being unpatriotic, and eventually, of having pro-German sympathies.

One aged Hollander remembered an example of how Rev. Weersing assisted one family in transferring the land from the father's name to the son's name so the son could claim exemption status.

Rev. Richard De Jong, when reminiscing about the troubled years, recalled that while Weersing was accused of keeping the boys free of the draft, the same thing took place in the American community as well. The procedures were legal but questionable. De Jong also recalled that though the Dutch were accused of poor support in the buying of war bonds, they were actually buying more bonds than their non-Dutch neighbors who were making all the fuss!

The hostility of the American neighboring community increased. In response, Rev. Weersing wrote a statement in the newspapers of the surrounding towns. The following was taken from the March 20, 1918 New Sharon Star:



## WEERSING STATEMENT

March 13, 1918

Whereas, I, J. J. Weersing, have been accused and charged with disloyalty to my government, the U.S.A., and whereas, it has been said of me that I have advised the people of Holland birth without any regard to what province they were born in, to stay out of the war.

Now, this is to certify that I hereby say to every person, every male person, of whatsoever province of Holland born in, that is now a citizen of the U.S.A. that it is his duty to support the U.S.A. obediently at every point in the world wide war; and that I say to him that he shall not make any claim for exemption that is not according to the Questionnaire; that he shall take his place with any and all in this war and go and fight Germany; that I have never been against said government; that I am loyal to the government of the U.S.A. and I want every person of Holland birth to understand this, that for all who live in the U.S.A., the Stars and Stripes come first, and if any one has accused me of being a traitor they are wrong, and I am now advising that every man of Holland birth shall be subject to draft in behalf of the U.S.A. That I further say to the Holland people no difference what Province you were born in or what part of Holland, to buy Liberty Bonds and do anything in obedience to the government that will in any way assist the U.S.A. in this war. I do not take the part of any other Nation, and since the U.S.A. is involved in the war and we are enjoying the benefits of the flag that floats over this nation it is your duty to protect that flag, and we must do it and will.

I will tell my congregation on Prayer Day, March 13, 1918, just what I am saying here and this statement is only made for the purpose of putting myself right before the world. I do not wish to be lied upon or misconstrued; I am for the U.S.A. first, last and all the time and I want our people of Holland birth or of Holland extraction to be the same.

I am going to publish this in the Oskaloosa, New Sharon and Pella papers to put myself square before the world and I do not wish to be traduced or lied on any more because I am first for the U.S.A. otherwise I would move back to Holland. I will advise our American boys of Holland descent that if necessary they shall give themselves for the American flag.

REV. J. J. Weersing

The letter did little to calm things down. In Pella, the not so sympathetic editor of the Pella Chronicle, W.A. Young, wrote the following article in the May 2, 1919 edition:

## PEORIA PREACHER PUT UNDER BONDS

**Rev. J. J. Weersing Charged  
Violating Espionage Act  
— Held to Grand Jury**

### MUST STAY OUT COUNTY

From Mahaska county papers and other sources we learn that Rev. J. J. Weersing, pastor of the Christian Reformed church at Peoria, about ten miles northeast of Pella, was arrested last week, charged with violating the espionage act. He was taken to Ottumwa by a deputy marshal and placed under bonds to appear before the grand jury. One of the conditions of his bond, we are informed, is that he must remain outside of Mahaska county until the grand jury has investigated his case. We are told that he left at once for Michigan.

This is not the first difficulty Rev. Weersing has been in regarding his loyalty, and the patriotic people of the neighborhood are considerably worked up over the state of affairs. We don't know just what Mr. Weersing's idea in regard to the war is, but we are told that he seriously objects to any demonstration of Americanism whatever. Every canvass for Liberty bonds or other war purposes seems to irritate him and causes him to have an outbreak. He was summoned to Des Moines upon one occasion and lectured by the state Council of Defense, and, although according to the newspaper reports, he confessed to doing several things that, to say the least, indicated that the government was not receiving any support from him, he was released with only a warning. The latest bond campaign seems to have opened the old breach between him and his loyal neighbors, and they made complaint which results in his arrest.

We have not seen a copy of the charge against Mr. Weersing, but have heard on the street that he showed his ill feeling toward the authority of the government in a number of ways. First of all, the American public school does not meet with the approval of this immigrant to our shores, and he has in connection with his church a parochial school, the direction of which is hampered less by law than is that of the public school. There was once a complaint that this church school did not fly the American flag. This was remedied later, but we are told that, upon the occasion of photographing the school, Rev. Mr. Weersing first required the flag to be taken down. A similar show of animosity toward the government which is harboring him is related in the case of some of the pupils of his parochial school, who were required to remove



buttons or other loyalty badges from their clothing before being allowed to appear in a picture of the school children. From reports we get in one way or another, Mr. Weersing appears to be a regular little kaiser over around Peoria. We heard of one member of his church who sold out his farm and rebought a few miles away, just in order to be allowed to send his children to an American school without interference from his pastor. We do not understand that Mr. Weersing is a German by blood, and we are not certain that he is especially in sympathy with the Germans in this war. It appears that he is simply peeved because the president did not ask his advice before breaking with Germany, and he has decided not to give the government his support.

There can be no doubt of the harm a man in the position Rev. Mr. Weersing has held at Peoria can do at a time like this, and the loyal people of the neighborhood have done well to complain against his conduct. A pastor of a church ought to feel a responsibility upon him to lead his people to the most active and zealous support of the government in the war, and one who fails to do so, even if he goes no further, is unworthy to hold the office of pastor. It is time for us to awaken to the fact that our American institutions are in danger from these foreigners who persist in bringing their un-American ideas with them, and we must insist that they either become Americans in fact or return to their home lands. We are pretty well convinced that the first thing to be done toward making real Americans is to insist that opposition to the American public school cease, and that the language of America be used in conveying all information or teaching on governmental or patriotic subjects. It may be well enough to study foreign languages for commercial or scientific purposes, but they should not be the common means of public communication in this country. Most of the spies and traitors in the country today are hiding behind a language not generally understood. People who are not willing to take the trouble to learn the language of America can well be spared from the country.

It is interesting to note the progression of events as recorded in the minutes of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church consistory.

March 5, 1917. The first mention of or talk of fire. Fire insurance was discussed.

April 3, 1917. Consistory decided to get ten fire extinguishers for the church.

Aug. 17, 1917. \$185 is the cost of the fire extinguishers.

Dec. 17, 1917. The church will go along with the Red Cross. The minister will help develop the program of the Red Cross.

Jan. 18, 1918. There has been difficulty working with the local Red Cross, will work with the Red Cross in Oskaloosa and will send the money directly to them.

April, 1918. The minutes state that Weersing was to have a trial on May 15, 1918 in Ottumwa.

Rev. Weersing was arrested in April of 1918, and was taken before the U.S. Commissioner at Ottumwa. He was released on bond and ordered not to appear again in Mahaska County as the feeling was so strong against him that fears of violence were entertained.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not he returned to Peoria is uncertain, but it appears that he did.

The mob was determined to get Rev. Weersing. Accountable witnesses state that the "rope was ready" and that the hanging was planned from a large tree by the parsonage in Peoria. Sometime in May of 1918, the mob arrived at the parsonage. When they arrived, Weersing and his family were gone. Word had been received of the imminent danger to his life. Weersing and his family were secretly taken away by car to Sully where they were lodged at the home of Bert and Jennie Mepelink and then taken to Prairie City where they stayed with Rev. Hilkema, Pastor of the Prairie City Christian Reformed Church. It is probable that he then spent some time in Des Moines as the consistory made personal contact with him there in May of 1918.\*

The New Sharon Star, May 1, 1918, followed Weersing's leaving with the following:

#### ALL IS NOW QUIET AT PEORIA.

The excitement that prevailed last week of the situation at Peoria seems to have abated. Since the arrest of Rev. Weersing last week, several of his congregation grew alarmed for their personal safety and left the community. The parochial school closed and the teachers have departed from the community. An appeal was made to Governor Harding by these people last week and he assured them that they could go back home with a feeling of safety, as he would protect their rights and investigate the situation.

With Rev. Weersing gone for good, and the school which was an eye-sore to the community closed, the feeling in the community will no doubt improve.



The mob was not finished. Stories circulated that they would be back to burn the town completely to the ground. They were also after the members of the Christian School Board. Jeanette (Vos) Nibbelink remembers her mother burying their treasures in the garden for protection. J.J. Stuursma, then proprietor of the Peoria Store, kept a "410" under the bed.

Word spread by mouth and telephone of a feared attack. The townspeople were scared. Said Leo Kiser, "It's no wonder they were scared. Every Dutchman was taken for a German!"

On the night of the planned attack, everyone left the town and sought refuge with relatives or friends; everyone but Eliza Samen, the town blacksmith. Samen himself of Dutch origin, had dealt with many of the local men in his business and considered them his friends. He spent the night in his blacksmith shop. Samen had sharpened his knives in case of trouble.

The burning of the town did not occur but a mob did meet with full intentions of performing the deed. Mr. Fleming remembers, "My father-in-law Ed Sheesly received a call from Oskaloosa, asking him to stop a group of men coming from Oskaloosa. He met them on the Warren bridge and stopped them from doing more damage. He told them they would only harm innocent people. "The following morning the townspeople returned to their homes.

\*The family later moved to Hull, Iowa, where Weersing took on another pastorate.

## Burning of Church and School

It became necessary to guard the church and school property during the night hours. There was a team of four for each night, two to guard earlier and two later so that the property would be under surveillance continually during the night hours.

In the very late hours of Thursday, June 13, 1918, sometime between 11:00 P.M. and midnight, the Peoria Christian School was set on fire. It appears that coal oil (kerosene) was used as an accelerant. Sparks from the school building spread so that the church building also caught fire. By the morning hours of June 14, 1918, both the school and the church had been leveled to the ground by a fire. Only heroic efforts by those who came to help (both the Hollanders and Americans) with buckets and ropes, prevented the fire from spreading to the parsonage and the horse stables.

The church and the school were a total loss. The pulpit from the church was saved as well as the church records and the consistory minutes. Much of the estimated \$25,000 loss was not covered by insurance.<sup>8</sup>

The consistory minutes of August, 1918 stated that a revolver was found in the field north of the church and that it would be turned over to the Secret Service.

The Pella Chronicle's W.A. Young reported the story in the June 2, 1918 edition:

## PEORIA CHURCH AND SCHOOL BURN

**Fire Thought to be of Incendiary  
Origin Due to Feeling on  
War Questions.**

### WERE IN TROUBLE BEFORE

People of this vicinity out late Thursday night reported the next day that they had seen the light of a conflagration east of town, and a little later news came that the church and parochial school of the Christian Reformed congregation at Peoria had been destroyed by fire during the night. This is the church of which J.J. Weersing was recently pastor, and it will be recalled that he was forced to leave on account of the wrath of his neighbors at his lack of patriotic support of the government in the war. The parochial school has also been a point of contention in the neighborhood because of its attitude toward American institutions and the implied contempt of its supporters for the public school. The church and school were situated in Mahaska county, and we append hereto an account of the fire and the subsequent action of the authorities as taken from the Oskaloosa Herald. It says:

"Fire that started between eleven and twelve o'clock Thursday night destroyed the parochial school and the large church edifice of the Christian Reformed church of the Holland people at Peoria, northwest of Oskaloosa. The fine large parsonage nearby was saved only by a change in the direction of the wind during the course of the fire. Buildings and contents are a complete loss. Cause of the fire is attributed to the work of an incendiary. The school and the congregation were under fire earlier in the season on account of alleged pro-German inclination, resulting in the removal of Rev. Weer-



sing, the pastor, from this part of the state. It is freely charged in the neighborhood that the fire was the result of the trouble earlier in the year.

"The fire was first seen, a little before midnight by Mrs. J. G. Van Gorp, who was up with a sick baby. She saw the fire in the school building and immediately telephoned to the Nick Van Gorp home, a half mile distant. Mr. Van Gorp was the first man at the scene of the fire and aroused the neighborhood. The fire by this time had such a start that nothing could be done to check its progress and only the change in the direction of the wind saved the parsonage, one of the best buildings in the community. Sheriff D. E. Henley, Postmaster H. S. Rosecrans and Attorney James A. Devitt, of the County Defense Council, went to Peoria this morning to investigate the matter and devoted the morning to the case.

"The circumstances point to the hand of the incendiary, but no definite conclusions can be reached until the matter is thoroughly sifted. Burning of the property is deeply regretted by every law-abiding citizen of the community and the county. If 'dirty work' has been done and the guilty parties can be located, the full measure of the law will be applied."

The following from the Oskaloosa Globe gives a few items not mentioned in the foregoing account:

"Some time between twelve and one o'clock Thursday night some person or persons set fire to the Parochial school at the old town of Peoria, in Richland township, this county. The fire communicated to the church and both buildings were entirely destroyed. Jas. A. Devitt and Henry Rosecrans, of the Mahaska County Council of Defense, and Sheriff Henley were notified at once, and went to the scene of the fire. The buildings were only partially insured. Naturally, if there are any clues of the incendiaries, nothing has yet been disclosed.

"It will be recalled that there has been a great deal of feeling in that locality aroused in the past few months. Rev. Weersing, who was the pastor of the Holland flock at that place, was arrested and taken before the U. S. Commissioner at Ottumwa. He was released on bond and ordered not to appear again in Mahaska county, as the feeling was so strong against him fears of violence were entertained. By order of the County Council of Defense this school was ordered closed some time ago, owing to the feeling existing. However, last week a representative of the state department came down and permitted the school to reopen just for the week, in order to permit the grades to be given out to the pupils. It is said the superintendent or principal of the school has occasioned considerable antagonistic feeling by some of his

remarks and acts. The total loss will probably reach \$25,000."

We learn further that services were held Sunday on the parsonage lawn. Rev. D. Jonker, a student of Grand Rapids, has been supplying for the past few Sundays. No arrangements have yet been made for rebuilding the church. According to the opinion expressed by some of the members, the school will not be rebuilt.

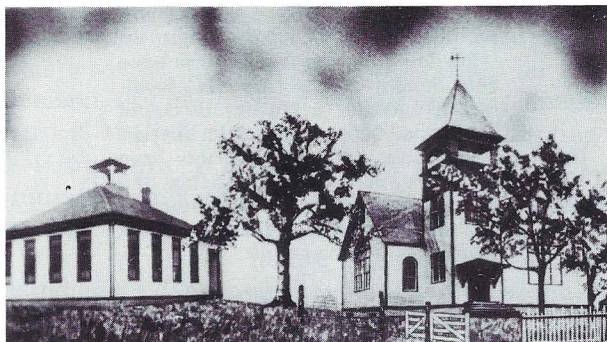
## Action Spreads

The burning in Peoria on June 13, 1918, was but the first in a series of several violent acts.\* Neighboring Sully, in Jasper County, was next. Threats of violence had increased throughout the summer until, in early autumn, it was decided to place armed guards at the Sully Christian School. It was watched night after night for weeks. The fire that damaged the building and its contents was discovered in the early morning hours of October 16, 1918, less than a half-hour after the guards had left. Bloodhounds were quickly brought to the scene but without success. In Tracy's report of the fire, he calls it the act of an incendiary, with coal oil again being used as an accelerant.<sup>9</sup> The building and its contents sustained limited damage.

In early February, 1919, a farmhouse just south of New Sharon, that had recently been purchased by a Hollander, was burned. This was the Andrew Leydens' home. The owner made preparations to rebuild but received a letter saying that if he did he'd be burned out again. A number of the Dutch members of the community were sent letters warning them to sell out and get out or expect to be burned out.<sup>10</sup> Some made the decision to leave. The letters were signed, "The Black Hand." It appears that Mr. Leydens did rebuild his home in spite of the threats.

\*An unsolved fire actually occurred about two months before the Peoria church and school burning. The Pella Chronicle of April 18, 1918, reported that "... fire destroyed the barn and all the outbuildings of Martin De Jong, 2½ miles northwest of New Sharon on April 10, 1918. The fire was started in the hay mow and was discovered about nine o'clock in the evening. Also lost were ten head of horses. The origin of the fire is a mystery." This suspicious fire is actually considered to be the first of the "Hollander burnings," though it received little publicity.





Peoria Christian School (left), Peoria Christian Reformed Church (right).

The fires continued. On February 27, 1919, the Dutch Reformed Church in New Sharon was set ablaze and burned to the ground. In this incident the hostilities were directed at the generally more Americanized Dutch Reformed Church, although no fault whatsoever could be found with the actions of the minister, Rev. Edward Huibregtse.

The New Sharon Star, March 5, 1919, reported as follows:

## DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH BURNED

**Fire Discovered Last Wednesday  
Night After Midnight Consumed  
Entire Building. . . Thought to  
be Work of Incendiary**

The Dutch Reformed church of New Sharon, the cut of which we here reproduce, was discovered on fire shortly after midnight, February 26th, by J. A. Day, who lives just across the street east of the church. The fire alarm was given at once and the boys responded quickly but the fire had received a considerable start and the water pressure was bad from some cause and although the boys fought hard it was impossible to save the building.

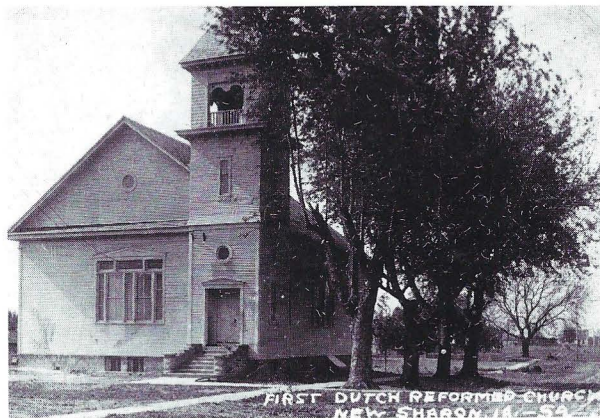
It is thought to be the work of an incendiary. On account of certain circumstances, the Reformed Church people became a little alarmed on Sunday night and kept the building under surveillance, but friends persuaded them that their suspicions were ungrounded, that no one would do such a thing, and they became easy and paid no further attention to the matter until the fire on Wednesday night. There had been no service in the church since Sunday, and no fire in the furnace.

The report in the Oskaloosa papers that the Reformed people had received threats involving the church and had been guarding it was without foundation, so the Rev. Huibregtse, pastor of the church, stated to us.

However, several members of the church received black hand letters recently of a personal nature and anonymous in character, which, coupled with this fire, makes it look like it was the work of a fire bug.

There has been some feeling among a certain class of people against the Holland people in this community because they persisted in speaking the Holland language and also conducted their services in the Holland language. While this is true, there has never been any claim or accusations of disloyalty against the Holland people in Prairie Township.

Many believe this feeling offers a possible motive for the crime. Be this as it may, which is merely guesswork, if this fire was the work of an incendiary, whatever his motive may have been, it was a dastardly and cowardly deed of as low a character as could be thought of, except that it did not involve the lives of human beings. It is not only bad for those who are suffering loss but for the community at large and gives us a reputation abroad that will take some time to live down, and yet the better element of this community is powerless to prevent such acts, nor can they forestall a repetition of this cowardly act, notwithstanding the sentiment is strong and outspoken against this crime. The individual who persists in settling his differences in this way is a most dangerous figure in the community. He is not even a good sport. He gives the other fellow no chance of defense, but steals unawares in the dead of night and applies the destructive torch. We may have undesirable citizens in the community but the individual who stoops to a crime like this



Reformed Church, New Sharon, Iowa.



is certainly the most undesirable of all. That the real perpetrator of this act will be caught and punished we have little doubt, and we predict he is not resting easy these nights.

Less than three months later, on Saturday evening, May 24, 1919, an attempt was made on the life of Rev. Ed Huibregtse, the pastor of the now burned Reformed Church of New Sharon.<sup>11</sup> The New Sharon Star of May 29, 1919, carried a detailed report of the incident.

## BLACK HAND AGAIN ACTIVE

**Attempt Made to Dynamite the  
Home of Rev. Edward Huibregtse,  
Pastor of Reformed Church—  
Fails to Explode**

The black hand gang is again at work in New Sharon. This time an attempt was made on the life of Rev. Edwin Huibregtse, pastor of the Reformed church of New Sharon. Four sticks of dynamite, with fuse and cap properly attached, were found against the north wall of his house on Sunday shortly after dinner. The fuse had burned to within a couple inches of the cap and went out. There is considerable difference in opinion as to the result of this bomb had it exploded. Some state it would have done little or no damage while others claim it would have been sufficient to blow the house to pieces. However this may be, it is evident that the intent and purpose was to finish Rev. Huibregtse and wreck his home, and is only a repetition of the dastardly, cowardly act of the criminal who burned the church in the winter. The purpose of this black hand gang is to prevent the Reformed people from rebuilding their church in New Sharon and to drive the Holland people from this community. This they may succeed in doing, for who wants to attempt to continue against a cowardly gang like that. Surely no stone should be left unturned until this crime is unearthed. Rev. Huibregtse discovered this bomb just after dinner and immediately notified the mayor, who in turn notified Sheriff Henley, who came up and looked the situation over and is working on the case. Parties are under suspicion and it is our opinion that the guilty parties had better make themselves scarce. The Star is of the opinion that the whole thing will be unearthed in time and those who are guilty made to suffer.

Mrs. Huibregtse, who has been a nervous wreck since the burning of the church three months ago, has been

with friends in Holland, Michigan for the past two weeks. Mr. Huibregtse was alone in the house at the time. The supposition is that the bomb was placed there sometime the night previous.

It is up to the town of New Sharon to make a most desperate effort to uncover the perpetrators of this crime. The town should offer a liberal reward for the apprehension of the criminal.

## \$1500.00 REWARD

The law abiding citizens of New Sharon and vicinity have raised and are offering \$1500.00 reward for the capture and conviction of the parties who burned the Reformed church and laid the dynamite bomb at the Reformed minister's door which was discovered last Sunday. This will probably be increased to \$2500.00 by next week. As an evidence of how the community feels this speaks loud.

About two months later a destructive fire visited the heart of the town of New Sharon, Iowa, in the early hours of Sunday, July 20, 1919. While the church bells were ringing and the people were getting ready for church, the fire was discovered. This was the Henry McVeigh elevator, a wooden structure four years old. The fire was considered an "unsolved, mysterious" fire and it was suspected that the fire was started by the same men who were involved in the other area "Hollander fires." McVeigh, it appears, though not a Dutchman, was having a good business relationship with the Hollander farmers and enjoyed doing business with them. It is believed that it was for this reason that he was targeted.

McVeigh did rebuild a new fireproof, concrete structure which still stands. (See Appendix A)

Gys Vos was a Dutchman who farmed south and west of New Sharon. He had received a series of threatening letters until, at 2:00 A.M. on September 27, 1919, coal oil was poured on the hay and straw in the mow of his barn. The hay was set on fire near the edge of the mow to permit the arsonists to escape. The fire spread rapidly and soon involved the entire building.<sup>12</sup> No one knew it at the time but this was to be the last of the "Hollander Fires."

The New Sharon Star, October 1, 1919, provided the details:

## FIRE BUGS STILL BUSY

Gys Vos lost his barn on last Saturday morning at about 1:30 o'clock, the barn and all the contents being entirely consumed, and in addition a cow shed and



chicken house nearby were also burned up.

The barn contained about 20 tons of hay, all Mr. Vos's harness except some halters which had been used in turning the horses to pasture, two wagons, two riding cultivators, and numerous other implements which were kept in the barn. Mr. Vos can see no reason for this fire by any accidental cause and believes with many others of this community that it is work of the person or persons who destroyed the Reformed church last spring and laid the dynamite bomb at the door of Rev. Huibregtse, the pastor of the Reformed church.

The only charge that we have heard against Mr. Vos is that he was born of Holland parentage and talks the Holland language. He is an American born citizen, however, and so far as we have been able to find out has been loyal to America and all her interests and this is an unfair way to treat him. If this is the work of an incendiarian it is bound to bring trouble to this community sooner or later.

Van Hinte, in his Hollanders in America, written in 1928, expresses himself very clearly concerning the deeper, long-standing, underlying factors which led to the mob spirit of these years.<sup>13</sup>

These events should not be ascribed to a lack of tact on the part of the Hollanders, at least not in the first place. The true and chief cause was an economic one, particularly professional jealousy (*broodnijd*), bread envy), as was shown in New Sharon, Mahaska County, where the Dutch farmers had taken over. In Peoria it was the Christian Reformed farmers who had remained the most Dutch, who had to bear the brunt of the attacks. But in New Sharon the Americans directed their attacks at the generally more Americanized Reformed element, although no fault whatsoever could be found with the actions of the minister in this town. Yet the Reformed Church was set ablaze and dynamite was discovered under the windows of the parsonage. A defective fuse that went out prevented worse consequences here! It could better be described as flames bursting forth after decades of a smouldering fire because the wartime psychosis was only a pretext, not the cause which lay much deeper. In the area of New Sharon, which was the area

of the most violent frictions since it was the one most recently "conquered" by the Dutch, the American farmers openly admitted that they wanted to get rid of the Dutch who surpassed them in agriculture. Thus the Americans responded with violence against the danger of being "bought out." Many Dutch farmers around New Sharon received threatening letters warning them to leave or they would be "burned out." Several Hollanders found out that the Americans meant business. A big barn of one of the church elders, who was born in America and had two sons serving in the army, was burned down and totally destroyed during the night.\* He was a man who could not be blamed for anything but his prosperity. Another colonist in the same manner lost a house that he was ready to occupy. And who was responsible time after time? It was American farmers who wanted to drive out the Hollanders, to force them to sell their land, and thus to obtain for a song a farm they would otherwise be unable to obtain! In some instances, American farmers had hired fellows to set fire to the churches, schools, houses, and barns of the "damned Dutch," paying \$50 to \$100 for each "job."

The fact that even native-born Holland Americans were among those who suffered indicates that these actions were not directed against specific individuals, not even against the Dutch in general, but only against the more successful of them. We could concur with (S.R.) Steinmetz's view of it as "punishment," as more or less a group revenge, the explosion of feelings of revenge of the "have-nots" against the "haves," between the more and the less successful. The conflict was between groups rather than between individuals. But here, as in other situations, it must not only have been an attempt at intimidation, but also a way to gain satisfaction by revenge and to bolster one's own hurt feelings and sense of inferiority. Just as with lynchings in general, one should see all these cases as reflex actions, despite a certain factor of "premeditation." This is extremely characteristic of

\*the Gys Vos barn



people like Americans, many of whom believe in primitive brute force. A lack of tradition and of higher education—as I have said before—made “mob psychology” so much more significant. Also “judicial” America has considered, more or less consciously, all these cases of mob violence as psychological phenomena of a passing nature. Since they were motivated by the temporary flaring up of tempers, rather than by permanently ingrained feelings of hatred, they did not have to be severely controlled. Seemingly, the courts have also perceived, although not always clearly, that in many respects American behavior can be compared to that of savages and that of children. Americans can be very vindictive but their thirst for revenge, being a direct, psychological impulse, can just as easily and quickly vanish.

## Investigation Begins

The following article is taken from the Police Officer's Journal, Summer, 1986, written by Roy L. Marshall, assistant state fire marshal of Iowa.<sup>14</sup> It describes in detail the events leading to the arrest of those accused of arson and conspiracy in the “Hollander Fires.”\*

Ole Roe was nearing the completion of his second four-year term as state fire marshal. When he became the first man appointed to that position in 1911, it was apparent that he had no background in criminal investigation. Born in Norway, he was a businessman and accountant who was also close to the governor. Seeing his role as that of an administrator, he intrusted the investigative work to the man he appointed as his assistant, J. A. Tracy. Organized state involvement in arson investigation began at that time. Tracy found all the work he could handle, and more. By 1918, he had undoubtedly investigated more suspicious fires and been instrumental in more arson related arrests than anyone else in Iowa up to that time. Roe had two deputies handling both inspection and investigation, but it was in Tracy he placed his greatest confidence. It was Tracy he assigned to the Peoria fire.

Roe, in the meantime, had let it be known that he intended to retire at the end of his current term of office. On the 1st of July, 1919, Tracy would be named to replace him. The “Hollander Fires,” as they were called, may not have been the biggest case during Roe's tenure, but it was certainly the biggest one going as he neared retirement. He can hardly be blamed for wanting to see it resolved before he left office. It wasn't. Tracy had worked long and hard on the case, as had local authorities and special agents who had followed the movements of certain area farmers. Tracy's reports say he had gathered a tremendous amount of evidence, including handwriting samples linking the letters to a suspect, but he was unable to persuade prosecutors to file charges. At about the time Tracy became Iowa's second fire marshal, the office abandoned the investigation. Exactly why isn't clear, but his frustration is reflected in a report Tracy later wrote the governor. He said, in part, that “a mass of evidence was taken by this department . . . but being short of funds and men, all the information we had was turned over to special agents, as they had plenty of funds and men.”

The special agents Tracy referred to were investigators of the State's Attorney General's Office. These agents were forerunners of what is now the D.C.I. If law enforcement in Iowa has produced its share of colorful and controversial figures, it's doubtful that more than a very few cast as long a shadow as the then Attorney General H. M. Havner. Havner relished investigation as much as prosecution, and he was not the one to shy away from reporters.

Following the burning of the Gys Vos barn, one of the suspects Tracy had identified was a 20 year old Navy veteran named Roy Eflin. Eflin was the son of a New Sharon farmer, and it was around him the investigation focused. He was thought to be the contact between certain area farmers who were providing

\*A thank you to attorney Paul Vos who came upon this article in his casual reading and provided the author with this long sought after information.



money for the fires and one or two others who were actually setting them. Havner and his agents made plans to go after Eflin. In what must be one of the mid-west's earliest attempts at utilizing a hidden electronic listening device in a criminal investigation, they succeeded. An informant lured Eflin to the Franklin Hotel in Des Moines.\* After professing an interest in making some easy money, he engaged Eflin in a discussion about the fires. The two left their hotel room for dinner and, while they were gone, agents entered to install a dictating machine in the wall separating their room from Eflin's. At about 11:00 P.M., Eflin and the informant returned. While agents were hurriedly writing what was later called a "stenographic account" of the conversation, Eflin related plans to burn yet another Dutch school.\*\* He told who had set the previous fires and named those who were paying the bill. He offered the informant \$200 to burn the Dutch schoolhouse that was their next target.

Anyone who's ever wired an informant can relate to how the investigators in 1919 must have felt. When they had heard enough, they knocked on the door and arrested Eflin. Havner was called to the scene and soon had another late-night confession. He and his agents spent the next two days in Jasper and Mahaska Counties confronting those implicated by Eflin's statement. They obtained several more confessions, including one from Tom Davis, who admitted to having set nearly all the fires.

But if Havner and his agents were elated, Tracy wasn't. He thought he had enough evidence for an indictment months before when he turned the case over to Havner. Like a lot of others, he may have been less than impressed with Havner's flamboyant methods. In this case, at least, the timing was sure to have raised a few skeptical eyebrows. Havner's account of the fires and arrests put his name on the front page. Two weeks later he was back in the news, announcing his candidacy for governor.

Eflin pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 10 years.\*\*\* The other confessions were retracted and the subsequent

legal maneuvering dragged on for months. The results were mixed. Davis, for example, was acquitted after pleading insanity due to a head injury suffered several years earlier. But at least those who had worked the case for so long and hard had the satisfaction of seeing the people responsible named and arrested. The "Hollander Fires" of World War I had finally been brought to an end.

\*This informant was probably Clyde Firebaugh, a "private detective" hired by Henry McVeigh at the McVeigh Elevator in New Sharon. Eflin was probably a suspect in the area fires already and was subsequently hired by McVeigh along with Firebaugh, the "private detective." It was McVeigh then, it appears, who was influential, with the help of Firebaugh, in luring Eflin to the Franklin Hotel in Des Moines on the evening of November 8, 1919, where the confession took place.

\*\*The Des Moines Register of November 11, 1919, reported that... "The agents listened to every word that was said and took a stenographic account of the conversation. Eflin told Firebaugh the whole story of the burning of a number of buildings and told Firebaugh that he would write a letter to Luther Howell, the farmer who is alleged to have led the conspiracy and guaranteed the financial returns to the men who did the burning. Eflin sat down at the table in the room and wrote the letter to Howell, arranging for the raising of \$200 to be paid to Eflin and Firebaugh as soon as they had burned the schoolhouse. He addressed an envelope and signed the letter with an "X". In the letter he referred to the burning of a school at Sully and told Howell to find out whether state agents were still keeping watch at the schoolhouse which the conspirators proposed to burn next.

\*\*\* Attorney General Havner stated that, "The crime of burning an inhabited dwelling in the night time is punishable to a life sentence in the penitentiary. The crime of burning a schoolhouse or church in the night time is punishable by a twenty-year penitentiary sentence, and burning a barn or other building brings a ten-year penitentiary sentence."



The Oskaloosa Daily Herald of November 10, 1919, picked up the story of the charges and arrests made and reported the following:

## MUST ANSWER TO SERIOUS CHARGE

STATE AGENTS CAUSE ARREST  
OF MAHASKA FARMERS

### SOME DEFENDANTS CONFESS

Detectives Clear Up the Mysterious  
Fires at New Sharon, and Sully.  
Others in Adjacent Territory  
Under Investigation.

#### Arrested

John Gerard  
Charles Gosnell  
Roy Steen  
Luther Howell  
Thomas Davis  
Roy Eflin

Charged with arson and conspiracy the above six men, residents of northwest Mahaska county, were arrested Saturday night following sensational disclosures by Attorney General Havner and state agents, probing the recent and frequent fires in the Holland communities.

Detectives of the attorney general's office have been working on the case for months, and had gathered sufficient evidence by last week to warrant the arrest of those apparently implicated in an organized effort to burn and destroy the property of the Hollanders.

#### Havner Was Here

Attorney General Havner and Oscar Rock, chief of the state secret service, came down from New Sharon Saturday, and working through Sheriff D. Ed Henley and County Attorney Max O'Brien, on warrants issued from the office of Justice J. W. Laffollette caused the apprehension of six men late Saturday night.

#### Those Under Charges

Roy Eflin, a son of a widow, is held on three arson charges and one conspiracy charge. He is confined in the county jail. Eflin's bond will total around \$50,000, according to the county attorney. He is the only one of the six held in jail.

John Gerard, a well to do farmer, faces a charge of arson and conspiracy. Bond \$6,500.

Luther Howell, farmer, who is said to have acted as an agent for the organized band of men attempting to oust the Hollanders, is charged with arson and conspiracy. Bond \$6,500.

Charles Gosnell, another farmer, conspiracy charge and bond.

Thomas Davis, a son of Fred Davis, a farmer, alleged to have been implicated with Eflin in the burning of the barn, is charged with arson and conspiracy.

#### List of Burnings

The men apprehended are charged with being instrumental in causing the destruction of the Dutch Reformed church of New Sharon, the burning of the Gys Vos barn, and the attempted destruction of the Holland school at Sully.

State agents are still working on the Peoria Dutch Reformed church fire, the placing of dynamite underneath the home of Rev. Edward Huibregtse, pastor of the New Sharon Holland church, and the burning of the McVeigh elevator. More disclosures and arrests may be expected later.

#### Organized Attempt

County Attorney O'Brien brands the whole affair as an organized attempt to run the Hollanders out of the community around New Sharon. It appears that certain farmers have banded together to oust the "Dutch." Funds supplied by these men were said to have been used to pay Roy Eflin and Thomas Davis for the destruction of Hollanders' property.

It is declared that \$100 was generally paid by the men for the burning of schools and churches and \$50 for the firing of homes and barns.

It is suggested from outside of official circles that the war record of some of the Hollanders may have been the cause of the action against the Dutch. Persons are now recalling the Peoria church affair.

#### Dutch Complain

Attorney General Havner has had numerous complaints from the Hollanders of northwest Mahaska county and has instituted the efforts to run down the offenders who are endangering the lives and property of the Dutch. He has told Mahaska's county attorney, Max O'Brien that he considers the New Sharon arson case the most important that he has handled in his term of office. He will bend every effort to secure all facts of the case and prosecution of all concerned.

#### Crimes Confessed

The attorney general was in Oskaloosa all day Sunday, assisting County Attorney O'Brien and Sheriff Henley in handling the cases. Most of those arrested have given the state and county officials written confessions of their part in the affair. All waived appearance before Justice of Peace J. W. Laffollette, and will go before a special session of the grand jury. All arrested by Eflin were able to furnish appearance bonds, and were released.



### **Eflin Tells Story**

Roy Eflin has said that he had a hand in the burning of the New Sharon Dutch Reformed church and the Gys Vos barn, and the attempted burning of the Holland schoolhouse at Sully. He professes ignorance of the Peoria Dutch Reformed church fire, the threatened dynamiting of the home of the pastor of the New Sharon Holland church, and other incendiary blazes of the community.

A pile of shavings and kindling saturated in oil was ignited in the basement of the New Sharon church and was the origin of the blaze which burned the Holland structure to the ground. The fire had a good start before it was discovered.

### **Barn Burned**

Oil poured on the hay and straw in the mow of the Gys Vos barn assured the complete destruction of the property. The hay was set on fire near the edge of the mow to permit the boys, Eflin and Davis, to escape. But the fire spread rapidly and soon involved the entire building, burning hay, machinery, etc.

### **Sully School House**

The attempted burning of the Dutch school at Sully was unsuccessful.

Eflin set fire to papers in the teacher's desk, but the blaze did not make the headway intended, and the building was saved. Eflin says the Holland language was used in the school.

The lad declares he was employed in the arson plot by Luther Howell, a go between for the band of farmers back of the movement. He said he was to receive about \$100 for every Holland school and church destroyed and \$50 for each burned dwelling and barn.

### **Betrayed by Friend**

The boy is bitter at his lifelong friend and companion, Clyde Firebaugh, who, he charges, was instrumental in bringing about the arrests. He declares his chum learned the facts of the plot and reported these to the state agents. Firebaugh and Eflin went to Des Moines for "a big time" last week. Firebaugh paid the bills. During the boys' conversation Friday night in a room at the Franklin Hotel, Eflin related the story of the Holland fires. A dictaphone concealed in the room recorded the conversation, it is said. Both young men were arrested by detectives waiting outside.

### **More Disclosures Promised**

The arrest of Firebaugh and Eflin

started the ball rolling. The attorney general and his agents came to Oskaloosa Saturday. The greater part of Saturday afternoon and evening was spent getting a line on those to be taken into custody. Warrants from Laffollette's court were taken to New Sharon Saturday night by Sheriff Henley and County Attorney O'Brien, and the arrests were made.

Sunday was a busy day at the courthouse in Oskaloosa. The men had waived to grand jury, but were called before Havner and O'Brien and questioned. Nearly all gave signed confessions.

The Saturday action by the state and county officers merely paves the way for what may result later in wholesale arrests.

### **Detectives Failed**

State agents uncovered the plot. Private detectives working in the community for months are said to have failed utterly in their efforts to solve the mysterious fires.

Eflin and Davis both served Uncle Sam. Roy Eflin was in the U.S. Navy, and Thomas Davis was a soldier in the 26th Division.

(See Appendix B)

## **Court Actions**

The court actions which followed were involved with the burnings and attempted bombing as described above. It focused, however, on the burning of the Gys Vos barn.

### **Trial of Roy (Curley) Eflin** (See Appendix C)

District court records of Mahaska County, Oskaloosa, Iowa, record that on December 4, 1919, a bench warrant was issued and an indictment was filed on Roy Eflin for the crime of arson in the burning of the Gys Vos barn.<sup>15</sup>

On December 11, 1919, Roy Eflin pleaded not guilty.<sup>16</sup> On January 12, 1920, however, he changed his plea to guilty to the crime of arson as charged in the indictment. He was sentenced for a period of not more than ten years in the Men's Reformatory at Anamosa, Iowa.

On April 19, 1921, Roy Eflin was granted a parole by Iowa Governor N.E. Kendall.<sup>17</sup> It would appear that he served a little more than a year in the Men's Reformatory.

### **Trial of Tom Davis** (See Appendix D)

Tom Davis, who earlier had admitted to having set nearly all the fires,<sup>18</sup> later retracted his confessions.

On December 4, 1919, an indictment was filed for the crime of arson in the burning of the Gys Vos barn. During the trial incriminating evidence was presented against Davis including statements which quoted Davis as having said that "he had gone with Eflin to help him burn the Gys Vos barn, and that he had been paid by Eflin for helping burn the barn."

During the trial a strong defense was made for Davis on the grounds of mental incompetency, caused by an injury to his head received while working on the mausoleum in New Sharon in 1912.<sup>19</sup>

During the trial a strong defense was made for Davis on the grounds of mental incompetency, caused by an injury to his head received while working on the mausoleum in New Sharon in 1912.<sup>19</sup> Davis was a veteran of the World War and served as a soldier in the 26th Division.



The judge for the proceedings was D.W. Hamilton. Following the judge's instructions to the jury of twelve, Tom Davis, on January 30, 1920, was found "not guilty."<sup>20</sup>

### Trial of Luther Howell (See Appendix E)

Luther A. Howell, a farmer, is said to have acted as an agent for the organized band of men trying to oust the Hollanders. He was charged with arson and conspiracy.<sup>21</sup>

During the trial Roy Eflin, now at the Reformatory at Anamosa, was called as a witness.<sup>22</sup> Incriminating evidence was presented against Howell not only by Roy Eflin, but by Chanley Lundy and George Baker as well.

On March 15, 1921, the jury of twelve reached its decision: "We the jury find the defendant L.A. Howell, not guilty..."<sup>23</sup>

### Other Court Actions

Further court actions followed. There were, however, no further trials. All other cases were dismissed.

In the case of the State of Iowa vs. John Gerard, "...the prosecution of this case is hereby dismissed and the defendant is hereby discharged and the sureties on his bond released. Dismissed for the reason that there is insufficient evidence to warrant a conviction; for the further reason that two similar cases have been tried by the Jury upon stronger facts and circumstances than this case and the verdicts have been 'not guilty'."<sup>24</sup>

In the case of the State of Iowa vs. Roy Steen, "...is dismissed by the court upon the written application of the county attorney for the reason that the evidence herein is insufficient to warrant the conviction of the said defendant."<sup>25</sup>

Other cases were dismissed by the Court upon application of the County Attorney.<sup>26</sup>

### Summary

The court actions centered, to a large extent, around the burning of the Gys Vos barn. The other burnings and attempted bombing came out in a lesser way in the legal proceedings.

Roy Eflin admitted guilt and was sentenced to a term not to exceed ten years in the Men's Reformatory at Anamosa of which he served about a year.

Tom Davis, his alleged accomplice who admitted guilt in most all of the criminal activity before the trial, pleaded not guilty. A head injury in 1912 while working on the mausoleum, became an important factor in the defense. The jury of twelve found Tom Davis "not guilty."

Luther Howell, reported to be the agent for the "five or six conspirators," was charged with arson and conspiracy and brought to trial. During the trial, Eflin was summoned as a witness from the Men's Reformatory at Anamosa. Under oath Eflin gave statements of Luther's involvement and guilt and stated that it was Luther who had paid him his share of the money for the burning(s). The jury of twelve found Luther "not guilty."

Legal action was taken against some of the "five or six conspirators" but no further court trials followed. All of the cases were dismissed.

Those guilty of burning the church and school in Peoria were not prosecuted for their crime. No confessions were made and there were no trials.

Van Hinte wrote his summary of the court proceedings as follows:<sup>27</sup>

The criminal courts handled all of these arson cases. A few rather light sentences were imposed and many cases were postponed, some because of illness of the people allegedly involved. In the meantime, elections were coming up, "and then strange things sometimes happen," as Reverend S. De Bruine wrote to me in April, 1920. He was one of those who had no great faith in the proceedings. And he added: "The closer to November, the less chance for a fair hearing." The state's attorney-general was a candidate for governor of Iowa and wanted votes. Other judicial candidates also wanted some position or other and so would certainly take into consideration the patriotic(!) feelings of their voters.\*

\*Van Hinte stresses this judicial "subjectivity," since in the Netherlands judges are appointed for life by the Monarch from a slate of candidates, and thus are not subject to political pressures. In the administration of justice, the Netherlands also do not use a jury system but leave judging completely to the "experts."



Indeed, De Bruine had the right view of the situation. Everywhere and at all times "justice" has been a very elastic concept, but in America justice is one of the most odd things. This was proven again in 1920 at the court hearings concerning the attacks on the Hollanders. This was particularly true in the handling of the case of G. Vos, who lived near New Sharon and whose barn was burned down on the night of September 27, 1919. The entire area held its breath. "The case attracted considerable attention of people from all over Mahaska during the ten days that it was in progress. Every day the courtroom was packed with spectators anxious to get in on all the proceedings," according to a newspaper clipping sent to me. It was revealed that one of the chief offenders, paid by Americans, one Davis, had suffered a fall in 1912(!) and has "sustained injuries to his head which have apparently wrought great changes in the conduct and character of Davis." Yet, he had been able to serve as a soldier during the war, but at the time of the hate campaign against the Dutch it was claimed he had no "will power" anymore and on these grounds he was found "not guilty"!!

In all fairness it must be acknowledged that there were also Americans who felt aggravated by this kind of "justice" meted out by a jury. "Does the attorney general of Iowa have a right to hire men of this class and keep them on the payroll?" one of them asked. His chief concern, however, was that this form of "justice" was so expensive. This case alone cost Mahaska County between three and four thousand dollars and thus this American especially wished that "all the taxpayers in the county could have heard this proceeding!"

## In Retrospect

Rev. Edward Huibregtse, then pastor of the Reformed Church of New Sharon whose parsonage was to have been bombed but for a defective fuse, and whose church was also burned to the ground, wrote some thirty years later,

It must be admitted that the people who resorted to violence and their sympathizers, terrorizing by mob rule felt a measure of justification for their conduct. Some of the people victimized gave some occasion for offense being taken: — unnecessarily using a foreign language, attempting draft evasion, a lack of zeal in the financial support of war causes — these matters were not confined to people of foreign origin! These and other grievances could well have been dealt with by common legal procedures.

All the above took place in an area with a diameter of about 25 miles. On one occasion an unorganized group met to divide this area with a north-south road as the boundary line: people of a certain national background would be permitted to live west of the line but prohibited to live on the east side!\* This was the resolution of 100 percent Americans seeing but dimly through a dense cloud of selfishness. After the arsonists were brought to justice in the County Courts, —one imprisonment and heavy fines and court costs for the others, the resolution was abandoned.

This is a sketch of race prejudice — "in the raw," in an otherwise law-abiding, wholesome community. Undoubtedly the same or similar elements prevail in all cases of flouting the rules of orderly, legal procedure; and the same conclusions will appear: A mild wrong, seen through the eye of suspicion and prejudice becomes so terribly evil, dangerous, destructive! A label of un-Americanism becomes such a terrible judgment upon the unfortunates who live on the shady side of prejudice! And again, measures of rank injustice, lawlessness, bigotry, terrorism, yes, anarchy must appear very correct and necessary under the white heat of unreasonable passion! And, looking back over it all, it seems so terribly stupid!

During and following World War II, there was none of this violence and hostility! One community, at least, learned the folly of giving prejudice a free hand. It didn't pay!

\*This north-south boundary line was the north-south road two miles west of New Sharon, Iowa.



# Appendix to Chapter XI

## Appendix A

The New Sharon Star  
July 23, 1919

### DESTRUCTIVE FIRE VISITS NEW SHARON

**McVeigh Elevator Totally Destroyed  
By Flames Sunday Morning —  
Loss Will Reach \$35,000  
to \$40,000**

Just as the church bells were ringing and people were getting ready for church service last Sunday morning, the H. B. McVeigh elevator was discovered on fire and the fire fighters rushed to the scene at once and tried to extinguish the flames, but to no avail.

The fire started in the corn pit in the basement and with the center of the elevator acting as a chimney clear to the top, a draft carried the flames rapidly and the entire interior was soon enveloped. Had we ten times the water it would have been of no avail because the building was entirely enclosed and all avenues were closed. The exterior was covered with heavy sheeting which could not be cut through, and with no chance to enter the inside and get to the center of the structure all possibility of subduing the flames was cut off.

Help was summoned from Oskaloosa in order to protect the Eclipse lumber yard and several residences that stood nearby, but with no thought of saving the elevator, and although they made a record run from the county seat in 15 minutes yet the building was a mass of flames and past all redemption when they arrived.

However, by heroic work on the part of the firemen, the office building which stood near the elevator was saved and all other buildings were kept wet down so that the fragments that fell all around did not ignite. About three-fourths of a ton of mill feed was saved from a southeast room of the elevator and taken to safety.

#### **Large Amount of Grain**

The elevator contained about

5,000 bushels of corn and 2,000 bushels of oats, some other small grain and a carload of tankage worth at least \$2,000.

The elevator cost Mr. McVeigh \$25,000 and his grain loss was from \$12,000 to \$15,000, making the loss around \$40,000.

#### **A Fine Structure**

This elevator was built by Neil & Momyer four years ago to take the place of the old that was consumed by fire at that time. It was one of the best built and modernly equipped of any in Iowa. In fact, there was no better elevator in the state in any respect, and it would cost at least \$35,000 to replace it with one as good at this time considering the increased cost of labor and materials.

This loss falls very heavy on Mr. McVeigh at this time. In addition to the first-hand loss, it cripples his business at a time when the most active handling of grain is at hand. The McVeigh family is one of the best and most highly respected families in the community and Mr. McVeigh is one of our best business men and they do not in any sense deserve to be overtaken by such a calamity.

#### **A Mystery**

The origin of this fire is a mystery. That it did not start from spontaneous combustion Mr. McVeigh and others familiar with the situation are well convinced. The grain in storage was all old and dry. The corn had all been moved the day before and was found to be heating. The elevator was free from dust and the empty dump pit where the fire started was clean as a ribbon.

A very mysterious thing happened. Before there was any water turned on, early arrivals noticed a fluid running out of the loading spout that runs outside of the building on the east and it was estimated that at least five gallons of this fluid came out of the spout. It was thought to be water as there was no odor of oil or gas. How this came about or what produced it is indeed a great mystery.

It was fortunate that there was little or no breeze stirring Sunday morning, otherwise it would have been hard to confine the fire to the

elevator. The Eclipse Lumber Yard just west of the elevator, and several residences on the southwest, were in danger, but they were all kept wet down, so that the fire did not spread.

New Sharon was grateful for the quick response of the Oskaloosa company, notwithstanding they could do little for lack of water.

Our water works proved inadequate in this instance, the tank being almost depleted, so that there was not enough water left Monday to put out the fire in the grain and burning debris.

Mr. McVeigh's loss will reach \$20,000 after the insurance of \$15,000 on building and \$5,000 on grain is applied. He will continue business, however. His office and scales were saved, with all records and he will install a local elevator, which will enable him to handle some grain while the elevator is being rebuilt; which Mr. McVeigh expects to do. The burning of this elevator at this time is not only a calamity for its owner, but works a hardship on the community. At this season of the year both elevators have all they can do and the community will necessarily suffer some inconvenience, which it will take some time to remedy.

## Appendix B

The New Sharon Star  
November 12, 1919

### BURNING PLOT IS UNCOVERED

**Prominent Farmers and Others  
Arrested By State Agents and  
Charged with Serious Crimes  
Confessions Made**

The entire community was thrown into a state of excitement on last Saturday, when the word went out that four men had been arrested in connection with the attempted burning of the Holland parochial school house at Sully about a year ago, the burning of the Dutch



Reformed church in New Sharon on February 27, 1919, and the destruction by fire of the barn of Gys Vos on September 26, 1919. The excitement grew on Sunday and Monday when additional arrests were made, the list including some of the most prominent farmers in this locality.

Those arrested to date were:

Roy Eflin, son of Mrs. Alice Hirsch.

Tom Davis, son of Fred Davis.

Luther Howell, farmer.

Roy Steen, farmer.

Chanley Lundy, farmer.

John Gerard, farmer.

Chas. Gosnell, farmer.

Tom Gosnell, farmer.

Jas. McKissick, farmer.

Geo. Smith, Merchant at Taintor.

Most of these men signed sworn statements confessing their guilt. Chas. Gosnell and Tom Gosnell were released for want of evidence and Geo. Smith, of Taintor refused to sign any statement.

This is the culmination of a series of fires which have occurred in the community during the last eight months.

The credit for the uncovering of this plot is largely due to H.M. Long, state agent appointed by the governor and working under the direction of the attorney general's office, who came upon the field about July 24th, soon after the attempt to dynamite the home of the Dutch Reformed preacher in New Sharon. After agents from the State Fire Marshall's office and private detectives from the Pinkerton Bureau had exhausted all efforts to land the guilty ones, Mr. Long came onto the field and took up the case. After working on the case for about two months he was joined by T. W. Passwater, another agent from the attorney general's office, who gave valuable

assistance, having come immediately following the Vos fire. These men worked in a very quiet manner and no one was aware that they were unearthing anything until late Saturday evening. According to reliable statements, on last Friday Mr. Long went to Des Moines and arranged for a room at the Franklin Hotel in Des Moines. To this room came Clyde Firebaugh accompanied by Roy Eflin. A dictaphone had been placed in this room without the knowledge of either, and soon after the boys landed they engaged in reminiscences of the past escapades. It was at this time Eflin told the entire story of his attempt to burn the Sully school house, the Dutch church at New Sharon and the Vos barn, southwest of New Sharon. He implicated Tom Davis in burning the barn and Luther Howell as furnishing the money to pay for the doing all three jobs. Just after finishing his story to Firebaugh, Eflin wrote a letter to Howell which the officers secured when they entered the room and this letter is incorporated in his confession. During all this time. Mr. Long and O. O. Rock, chief of state agents had been listening to the story of Eflin, and at the close Mr. Long entered the room and placed Eflin and Firebaugh under arrest and opened a door between the two rooms and O. O. Rock entered. Soon after, Eflin made a complete confession to which he signed his name and made oath.

Mr. Passwater who was at New Sharon was communicated with and arrested Thomas Davis, whom Eflin implicated. Mr. Long accompanied by Attorney General Havner and O.O. Rock brought Eflin and Firebaugh to New Sharon on the forenoon train, where they were joined soon after by Mr. Passwater

with Tom Davis, who also signed a sworn confession and all went to the Caudle Hotel and later in the day Luther Howell was arrested by Mr. Passwater and brought in. After considerable deliberation, Mr. Howell made a complete confession, signed and swore to it corroborating the statements of Eflin and Davis and implicating others. Late in the evening County Attorney Max O'Brien and J. A. Divitt were communicated with and came to New Sharon, accompanied by Sheriff Henley, who in company with Mr. Passwater took Roy Eflin to the County jail at Oskaloosa in default of bond. Bond for Howell and Davis were fixed up here on Saturday.

On Sunday, T.W. Passwater and Sheriff Henley arrested John Gerard, Chas. Gosnell, and Thomas Gosnell, Roy Steen and Chanley Lundy, and on Monday, T.W. Passwater and Sheriff Henley also placed under arrest James McKissick and Geo. F. Smith. There are no charges at this time against either Chas. or Tom Gosnell and G.F. Smith. The others are under bond ranging from \$1500 to \$6500.

The charges against these men, except the above noted are arson or conspiracy and in some cases both, and they are bound over to the grand jury, having waived preliminary trial. Up to this time Eflin has failed to secure bonds.

The report that more arrests are to follow is unfounded so far as the Star was able to find and such report is without the sanction of County Attorney, Attorney General, or any of the state men. So far as the Star could find out, no more arrests are contemplated and we looked into this matter very closely.

## Appendix C

### District Court Mahaska County State of Iowa vs. Roy Eflin

Indictment for the crime of arson against Roy Eflin for the burning of the Gys Vos barn dated December 4, 1919:

Roy Eflin on the 27th day of September, 1919, in the nite time of said date, did willfully, maliciously and feloniously set

fire to and burn a certain barn then and there situated in Mahaska County, Iowa, and then and there owned by Gys Vos and used by said Gys Vos as a barn, with a willful, malicious and felonious intent then and there on the part of him, Roy Eflin, the defendant, to cause said barn aforesaid to burn and be consumed. All contrary to the form of the statute and



against the Peace and Dignity of the State of Iowa.

Max O'Brien  
County Attorney

**Report of the Special Agent  
State of Iowa vs. Roy Eflin**

William Griffin, being sworn states:

That I am one of the State Special Agents in the employ of the State of Iowa, and during the month of November, 1919 I had a talk with Roy Eflin in the Mahaska County jail and in that conversation he told me that he had burned the church at New Sharon and received \$50 for it, and had burned the Gys Vos barn, and had been paid \$50 for doing so. He signed a written statement after telling me these things, and after he had read over the statement.

(signed) W. B. Griffin

**State of Iowa vs. Roy Eflin  
Cause No. 9955, January 12, 1920:**

Now on this day this cause came for hearing, the defendant, Roy Eflin, being present in court in person, and withdraws his plea of not guilty heretofore made and enters a plea of guilty to the crime of arson as charged in the indictment, and the said defendant, Roy Eflin, asks that time for pronouncing of said judgment and asks that same be now made. And the defendant Roy Eflin being informed by the court of the nature of the indictment and being asked if he has any legal reason why judgment should not be pronounced, and he is saying there is none, it is the judgment of this Court, that the said defendant, Roy Eflin, be confined in the Men's Reformatory at Anamosa, Iowa, for a period not to exceed ten years, and that he pay the costs of this prosecution, to all of which the said defendant accepts. Bond on appeal fixed in the sum of \$5000.

Appendix D

New Sharon Star  
January 28, 1920

**THOMAS DAVIS  
NOW ON TRIAL**

**New Sharon Young Man in Court  
Charged With Being an Accomplice  
in the Burning of the  
Gys Vos Barn**

The trial of Thomas Davis as being an accomplice of Roy Eflin in the burning of the barn belonging to Gys Vos, Hollander living four miles southwest of New Sharon, last September is now going on at Oskaloosa. A large throng of witnesses from New Sharon are being examined. The case was called last Wednesday and two days were consumed in getting a jury. The first evidence in the case was taken on last Friday, when Roy Eflin, who pleaded guilty to burning the barn and was sentenced to 10 years in the penitentiary about a week before the Davis trial started, was put on the stand. In his evidence before the jury he verified his confession made in the beginning and in which he named Davis as an accomplice. According to Eflin's testimony, he and Davis were to receive \$50 for burning this barn, but that he only gave Davis \$12.50 because he had told others about it and by this means clues were gotten that finally resulted in their being arrested.

Davis' own confession as to his part in the burning, which he made soon after his arrest was introduced as evidence.

Owen Brackney, another witness for the state, was called on Friday and testified that Davis said to him before the fire that he was going to make \$25.00 that week and acknowledged to him after the burning that he and Eflin had done the burning.

O. O. Rock and H. M. Long, state agents, were both put on the stand and gave evidence in regard to securing the confession of Davis on the day of his arrest.

Gys Vos was also a witness for the state and in his testimony corroborated the facts set forth in the confession of both Davis and Eflin as to his movements about the premises on the night of the fire.

Garrett Hasselman, who was a visitor at the Vos home the night of the fire also gave testimony on the part of the state.

The state rested on Saturday morning and the testimony for the defense was taken up. Witnesses were examined to establish the good character of Davis prior to this charge. Sidney Harper, C. T. Wilson, A. M. Evans, Wm. Stephen and others were heard on this point.

Fred Wymore was put on the stand to



give evidence as to the treatment of Davis by the state agents, Attorney General and County authorities in securing a confession, but little of his testimony was allowed.

Witnesses on the part of the defendant were placed on the stand to liquefy the testimony of Roy Eflin and Owen Brackney.

On Monday, Attorney for the defense offered testimony on a new line of defense. Several witnesses were placed on the stand to show that Tom Davis is mentally irresponsible, caused by an injury to his head received while working on the Mausoleum in New Sharon in 1912.

Those giving testimony in this regard were Dr. Phillips of Montezuma, formerly of New Sharon, Dan and Bent Wymore, Roy Ellis, Ross Moore and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Davis, father and mother of the defendant. Dr. Abbott was also put on the stand on Tuesday as a medical expert and gave testimony as to the nature of a fracture of the skull and how it affects the nerves and tissues of the brain.

New Sharon Star  
February 4, 1920

## THOMAS DAVIS WINS VERDICT OF JURY

**Young Man Charged With Being  
Accomplice of Roy Eflin in  
Burning Vos Barn Cleared  
By Jury**

The Jury in the case of Thomas Davis charged with being an accomplice of Roy Eflin in the burning of the Gys Vos barn last September was cleared by the Jury after deliberating for several hours. The case consumed ten days in the district court at Oskaloosa, during which time a large number of witnesses were examined by both the state and the defense. A strong defense was made for Davis on the ground of mental incompetency.

## Appendix E

### **District Court Mahaska County State of Iowa vs. Tom Davis**

Some of Judge Hamilton's instructions to the jury:

You are instructed that there is no evidence of the commission of the crime charged except the alleged admissions and confessions of the defendant made out of court; and you are therefore instructed to render a verdict of not guilty.

You are instructed that the good character of the defendant as it has been established may itself, in connection with all the evidence generate a reasonable doubt and entitle the defendant to an acquittal, even though without such proof you would convict.

You are instructed that if you find that the defendant was of unsound mind on the 27th day of September, 1919, that you shall return a verdict of not guilty and acquit the defendant.

You are instructed that the alleged admissions and confessions of the defendant made on the 8th day of November, 1919, were involuntary and that same are not to be considered by you and the said alleged admissions and confession are withdrawn from your consideration.

### **District Court Mahaska County State of Iowa vs. Luther Howell**

Eflin summoned as a witness in the above case:

And now on this day, it is hereby ordered that Roy Eflin, now at the Reformatory at Anamosa, Iowa, be delivered into the custody of the Sheriff of Mahaska County, Iowa, to appear as a witness in the above entitled case commencing at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 7, 1921.

### **State of Iowa vs. Luther Howell**

Eflin testifies:

Roy Eflin, being introduced and sworn by the foreman of the Grand Jury testified as follows: Before he gave any testimony he was advised by Counsel for the State that he had been indicted for the burning of the Gys Vos barn and the Dutch church of New Sharon, and that any statement that he would make would be used against him, and that he could not be compelled to answer, but that if he was willing the state would like to have him tell the truth. The witness stated that his statement was



being made for the purpose of letting the truth be known about the whole matter, and for the benefit of the state. I further state that Luther Howell arranged with me to burn the Gys Vos barn and told me he would give me \$50. This was on the day of the barbecue at New Sharon. He also arranged with me about the burning of the schoolhouse at Sully, Iowa. I do not remember this date but it was shortly before the burning or attempted burning of the schoolhouse at Sully. He was to pay me \$100 for this job. I set fire to the schoolhouse, but the fire was put out. Howell drove me up to Sully the night I set fire to the schoolhouse. I further state that after Howell arranged with me about burning the Gys Vos barn, I and Tom Davis and he agreed to help me with the job. Davis and I went out and burned the Gys Vos barn. After the barn was burned, Davis complained to me about not getting his share of the money. I saw Howell on the street at New Sharon and told him that Davis was complaining because he had not had his money for burning the Vos barn. Howell promised that he would get the money. Davis was on the street at the time, and I went over and told him what Howell had said. Within a few days after that Howell came into the elevator where I was working and motioned me to one side and pointed to his outside overcoat pocket, and I reached in his coat pocket and took out the money which was \$50. I gave Tom Davis \$12.50 of this money. The balance of it I kept myself. I regret that it is necessary for me to make this statement but as I stated above, I want the exact truth to be known about the whole matter.

/signed/ Roy M. Eflin

#### **State of Iowa vs. Luther Howell**

Chanley Lundy testifies:

Chanley Lundy being duly sworn before the Grand Jury testified as follows; and before his testimony was given he was advised by counsel for the State that he was not required to answer and could not be compelled to answer and that he was already charged with being implicated in the burning of the Gys Vos barn and that

whatever statements were made by him might and would be used against him.

He then said: that he had signed the statement and sworn to it on the 9th day of November, which was as follows: State of Iowa, Mahaska Co. I, Chanley Lundy, after being first duly sworn on my oath do depose and say, that the following statement is made of my own free will and accord and without fear or any promise or hope of reward, without threats or coercion being used on me, but said statement is made for the sole purpose that the truth may be known in reference to the burning of the Gys Vos barn, near New Sharon, Iowa. About a week or ten days before the Gys Vos barn was burned, Roy Steen asked me if I would contribute to a fund to drive the Dutch out. I told him I would. This conversation took place at the home of Roy Steen one Sunday. After the Gys Vos barn was burned, Roy Steen came to me and told me my share was \$10 and that John Gerard would give me the money, and for me to hand it on to the next one. John Gerard soon after gave me either \$32 or \$42. I put my \$10 with it and gave the money to L.A. Powell about 8 P.M. one Saturday. John Gerard told me to give the money to L.A. Howell. After I had given the money to L.A. Howell, either Howell or John Gerard told me that Tom Gosnell and Chas. Gosnell were contributing to this fund. This affidavit was read over to me by the County Attorney and I read the same myself before signing it and swearing to the same. My recollection of the facts are as I stated then in the affidavit, which I made November 9, 1919.

/signed/ Chanley Lundy

#### **State of Iowa vs. Luther Howell**

George Baker testifies:

George Baker, being produced and sworn by foreman of the Grand Jury testified as follows:

I am 53 years of age, live one mile from New Sharon, Iowa on a farm and am acquainted with John Gerard. Had a conversation with him in New Sharon, just shortly after the reported attempted dynamiting



of the Preacher's house in which conversation Gerard said, that the way to get rid of the Dutch was to burn them out, and expressed his approval to attempt to dynamite the preacher's house. I also overheard a conversation about the same time between Orley Lawrence and Tom Gosnell, in which it was said if there are any arrests made, speaking with reference to the attempted dynamite, we will clear

them if we have to send to New York City for a Lawyer. In speaking with reference to the dynamiting in my conversation with Gerard I told Gerard that was not the thing to do, and Gerard said it was the very thing to do. That that was the way to get rid of them. He also said burn them out and get them out of there.

/signed/ G.M. Baker

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Jacob Van Hinte, Netherlanders in America, 1928, translated and reprinted, General Editor Robert P. Swierenga; Adriaan de Wit, chief translator (Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 760-761.

<sup>2</sup>Van Hinte, p. 761.

<sup>3</sup>Fiftieth Anniversary of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church, 1944.

<sup>4</sup>Van Hinte, p. 760.

<sup>5</sup>Fiftieth Anniversary of the Peoria Christian Christian School, 1957, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Rev. Edward Huibregtse, "Anti-Foreign (Dutch) Riots in Marion/Mahaska Counties, Iowa," 1918-1919.

<sup>7</sup>Oskaloosa Globe, June, 1918.

<sup>8</sup>Roy L. Marshall, Police Officer's Journal, Summer, 1986, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup>Marshall, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>Marshall, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>Marshall, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup>Oskaloosa Daily Herald, November 10, 1919.

<sup>13</sup>Van Hinte, p. 761 ff.

<sup>14</sup>Roy L. Marshall, Police Officer's Journal, Summer, 1986, p. 35 ff.

<sup>15</sup>Combined Docket Book No. 38, Mahaska Co., Oskaloosa, Iowa, p. 9 ff.

<sup>16</sup>Mahaska County District Court Record Book 37, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup>Combined Docket Book No. 37, Mahaska Co., Oskaloosa, Iowa.

<sup>18</sup>Roy L. Marshall, Police Officer's Journal, Summer, 1986, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup>Marshall, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup>Mahaska County District Court Record Book 37, p. 71.

<sup>21</sup>Combined Docket Book No. 38, Mahaska Co., Oskaloosa, Iowa, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>Mahaska County District Court Record Book 38, p. 198.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* p. 214.

<sup>24</sup>Mahaska County District Court Record Book 37, p. 234.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.* p. 202.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* p. 203.

<sup>27</sup>Van Hinte, p. 762 ff.



## Chapter XII The Years After

### "Times are Changing" — Says Peorians

#### Old Settlers Gather Sunday at 3rd Reunion

Shades of the golden past were recalled again and again by many a bent and silver haired "old settler", Sunday, when they gathered from far and near on the hill at Peoria for the third annual reunion of those sturdy oldsters who, fifty or more years ago were bravely pioneering the country in and around the old settlement of Peoria.

##### 300 Attend

There were over 200 of them, and with the younger generations they numbered 300 strong. Rainstorms here and there and threatening clouds kept many away.

##### Sweet Memories

In front of the quaint old community hall, they gathered to eat the lavish picnic dinner at noon and later in the shade of the old trees to listen to the old timers smilingly and with hearts full of sadly sweet memories, tell again of the Peoria of long ago.

##### Represent 31 Communities

In the registration books were names from 31 cities and towns other than this immediate vicinity.

##### Old Timers

Former school-teachers, preachers, farmers, storekeepers, and others from almost every walk of life were there greeting friends with whom they had worked side by side when the virgin sod along the Skunk river valley was still fresh from its first plowing.

##### Officers Re-elected

Presiding at the meeting was W.S. Lindsley of Beacon. Mr. Lindsley was re-elected president of the association.



**Old Settlers Reunion held August 11, 1938. The first reunion was held in 1936**

The genuine pioneers of Peoria were rounded up after the program Sunday for a picture. All of them are 75 years old or older. Reading from left to right they are: Front row—Sarah E. Fry, 82, Marshalltown; Emily Boyd, 86, Oskaloosa; Eldora Adkisson, 83, New Sharon; Etta Shaw, 79, Tacoma, Washington; Laura Wehrle, 75, New Sharon; Mary Straughan, 78, New Sharon.

Back row—Josh McKeever, 81, Maxburg, Iowa; Jake Dunwoody, 75, Peoria; Geo. M. Shelley, 82, Iola, Kansas; O.R. Shaw, Tacoma, Washington; R.C. Fleming, 81, Taintor; G.A. Leanhart, 75, New Sharon; J.B. Wehrle, 76, Taintor; Wm. Johnson, 75, Pella.

Other officers re-elected for the coming year are vice-president, C. Kiser, Oskaloosa; secretary, Mrs. T.E. Gosnell and treasurer, R.C. Fleming, Taintor; chaplain, Warren Wharton, Fremont.

##### Give Program

On the steps of the hall the various speakers appeared in their turn. "Old Friends" by Edgar A. Guest, was read by Mrs. John Warren as a fitting tribute to those attending the reunion. She also read Riley's immortal "Out to Old Aunt Mary's." Another appropriate reading was given by Mrs. Melvin Fleming.

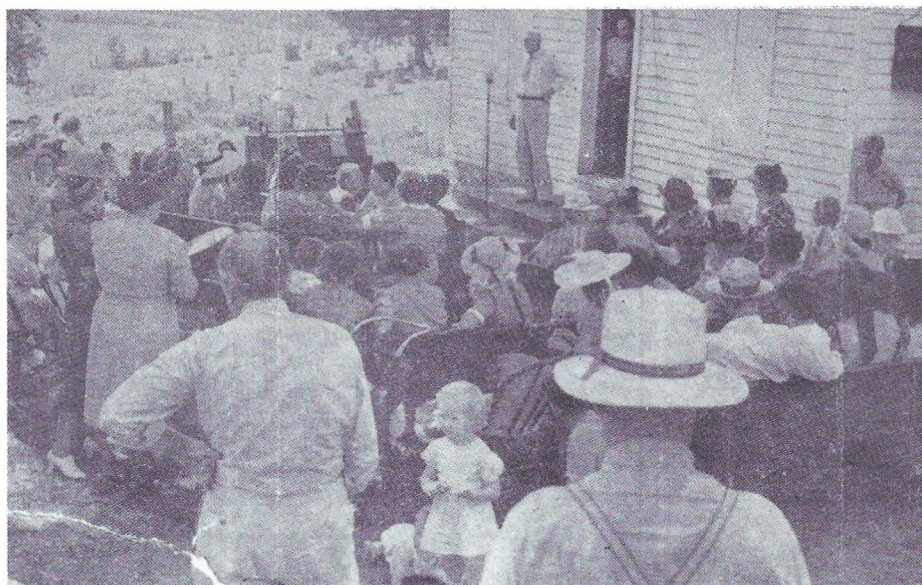
##### Change

Throughout the day the old timers were often heard to say, as they chatted, "Peoria has changed, like everything has changed."

And of course fifty or sixty years will change a community. Peoria today is different in many ways. Buildings have disappeared or have been moved and remodeled. The old farms have changed. Even the old trees have changed a bit, but underneath it all is that peaceful, friendly spirit that is so evident when the Peoria pioneers gather on the hill to pick up the loose ends of old but not forgotten associates.



# Annual Peoria Homecoming Draws Over 250 Attendants



This is only part of the crowd that attended the annual Peoria Homecoming Sunday and shows president W. S. Lindsley on the speakers platform as he opened the afternoon business meeting.

## Old Settlers Reunion held Aug. 7, 1941

The annual Peoria homecoming celebration held at Peoria Sunday, August 3 attracted some 250 persons who were entertained by various persons and groups with musical numbers and talks.

The meeting was called to order at 2 o'clock by president W. S. Lindsley who welcomed Peorians to the celebration and introduced J.H. Taylor who gave the invocation.

### Secretary Reports

After the singing of two numbers by the congregation, President Lindsley asked for the secretary's report and minutes read of the 1940 meeting by Mrs. T. E. Gosnell.

Messages of greetings were read from Mr. and Mrs. O. R. Shaw of Tacoma, Washington.

### Program

Following the secretary's report, the meeting was turned over to Mrs. Lucille Fleming who had charge of the entertainment.

Her program was as follows:

Song—Mrs. Mahala Fox; accompanist, Mrs. Geo. Hunt.

Reading—"The Old Home"—Mrs. Rachel Owens.

Saxophone Solo—Miss Grace Boyd; accompanist, Mr. Ross Boyd.

Songs—Barbara Gable.

Talk—J. U. Smith, Ottawa, Kansas.

### Oldest and Youngest

Of the 200 registered attendants, Mrs. Emily Boyd of Oskaloosa was the oldest who is 90 years of age. Next in age were Robert Fleming, 84, of Taintor and Mrs. Nettie Fleming, 80, of Grinnell. Youngest was Rachel Ann Axmear of near Wright.

### New Officers

Following the entertainment, Mr. Lindsley called the meeting to order for the purpose of electing new officers of the Peoria Homecoming association. Results of the election are:

President—W.S. Lindsley, Beacon.

Vice President—Vernie Rice, New Sharon.

Secretary—Mrs. T. E. Gosnell, New Sharon.

Treasurer—Chester Kiser, Oskaloosa.

Chaplain—Warren Whorton, Fremont.

### Committees

Also chosen were dinner and program committees for the 1942 affair.

The dinner committee consists of Mrs. Ella Rice, Mrs. Mamie McCain and Mrs. Carrie Jackson. In charge of the program are Mrs. Lillie Warren and Miss Mamie Sheesley.

### Quartet Sings

The closing number on the afternoon's program was three songs by the Harmony male quartet which is composed of Fred Vander Schaaf, Henry Bosveld, Wm. C. Stursma and Henry Pothoven.

### Attendance

According to the official register, persons from 33 towns attended the homecoming, some of them coming from great distances.

Included among those from the longest distance are Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Swisher of Henry, South Dakota, J. U. Smith of Orient, Iowa, Lota Stanford and daughters of Gary, Indiana.

Alva Dunwoody and children of Moberly, Mo., Mr. and Mrs. Lester Willingham and family of Moberly, Mo., the Wright families of Belle Plain, Mrs. Dorothy Boat and children of Cedar Rapids.

J. E. Jackson, Osceola, Mr. and Mrs. Hershel Swisher, Orient, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Fox, Mrs. Wanda Allen Hanna, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hutchinson and D. T. Spain, all of Des Moines.



## Justices of the Peace—Peoria

1851 Henry Gemble  
1858 Theodrick Spain  
1866 Simon G. Gary  
1871 Joseph McCarter  
1877 Ezra Craven  
1881 A.P. Kitching  
1901 John Smith  
1902 T.G. Sheue  
1903 U.S. Hull  
1905 W.E. Ashton  
1908 W.M. Moggett  
1908 C.B. Hess  
1913 R.C. Fleming  
1914 G.S. Hull  
1915 W.T. Wehrle  
1927 John Vander Hart  
1936 Tabe Vander Veen  
1941 Warner Vande Voort  
1941 Tabe Vander Veen  
1951 Andrew Bandstra  
1961-1969 Jacob Vander Molen

## Selected Actions of the Board of Trustees of Richland Township

April 6, 1896—

Will pay compensation for labor on the Public's Highway as follows: for man and team two dollars per day. For one man per day - one dollar.

Nov. 3, 1897—

Paid to Sheesly and McAuley for coal and coal tax - \$23.66.

April 1, 1901—

John Smith was recommended to be appointed Justice of the Peace to fill the vacancy.

Oct. 3, 1902

Paid to Sheesly and McAuley for rock for Hall - \$26.65.

April 6, 1903—

The board authorized Dr. Logue to quarantine Austin Fleming for scarlet fever.

April 6, 1903—

A bill for \$2.50 to C. McCutcheon for fixing bridges was paid out of general funds.

April 4, 1904—

T. G. Sheue handed in his resignation as Justice of the Peace and the board authorized the Clerk to recommend J. R. Lunt in his place.

It was ordered to pay \$1.50 a day for a man and \$3.00 a day for man and team.

April 3, 1905—

The board ordered C. McCutcheon janitor for

the year of 1905 and paid McCutcheon \$75 for repair for hall.

April 2, 1906—

The board settled with N. Hunt for caring for the Peoria Cemetery up to date and was appointed to have charge of same for year 1906.

Ordered a penalty of \$10.00 to be paid by any road superintendent failing to grease plow and grader while bright and in good shape before putting them in shed for winter storage and put them in shed, if shed be provided.

Nov. 5, 1906—

Bill presented by Thomassen and Starkenburg for hinges, hooks and lock for tool house in Peoria of \$1.60.

Jan. 18, 1907—

Paid Clate Hewitt for plank and labor on county bridges \$6.75.

Mar. 21, 1908—

Recording of Quick claim deed for a lot from trustees of Christian Church to township trustees for cemetery use.

April 6, 1908—

Board appointed Dr. Frank Quire of Taintor as doctor for infectious diseases in Richland township for the year of 1908.

April 10, 1908—

Paid Shockley Bros. and Cook for five large cards of the rules of State Board of Health to be put up in five places in the township - \$2.50.

April 5, 1909—

The board ordered Robert Kiser as superintendent of Peoria cemetery.

The board ordered lots to be sold in Peoria Cemetery at \$10.00 per lot.

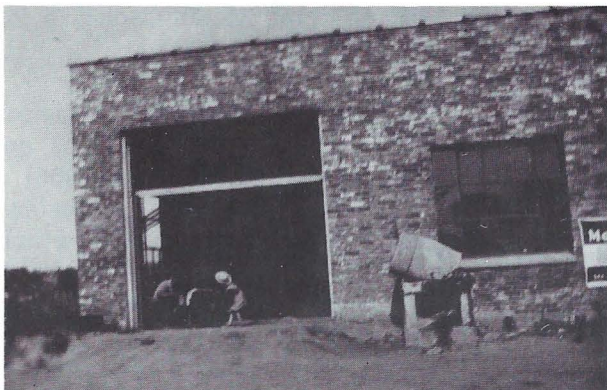
Nov. 7, 1910—

Dr. Quire presented a bill of \$21.65 for two visits for infectious cases in Lower Grove smallpox. One visit to A. S. Hornzyl, one to T. Kelderman. This bill is to be presented to county board and if refused to pay this bill, the board of Richland Township pays it out of township funds as the board of the township appointed Dr. Quire to doctor of infectious cases when a physician was called by township board.

## Fred's Shop

Fred Vander Schaaf built his shop about 1927-1928. The mason work was done by Walter Laud. It was a well built building put up quite inexpensively due to the economic depression. The building replaced a wooden structure, in the same





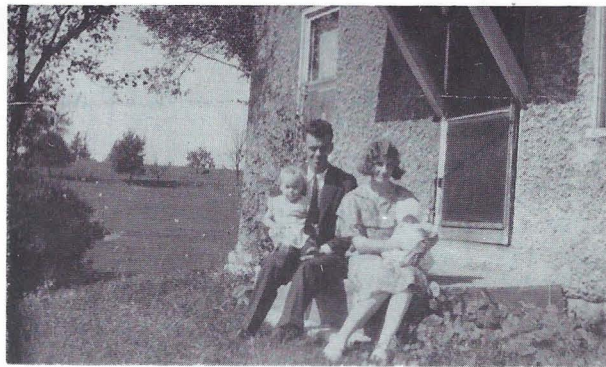
Fred's shop, Peoria, Iowa

location, which had two stalls for cars in which Fred had first worked.

The business was mostly auto repair. Bill Stursma worked for Fred three years during which time they did auto repair work, but also hauled livestock with a truck. Bill left in 1930 after he was married, but his brother Jake Stursma bought an interest in the business and stayed for a short time.

Fred had a wind charger attached to the south side of his shop. It was the only one in town. The propellers driven by the wind were used to charge a set of batteries in the basement which in turn were used to light up the shop. Car batteries of customers were also charged in the same fashion. The wind charger tower was 35 feet tall. Fred was the only one who dared to climb it.

John Pothoven became active in the business in 1935 at which time they became involved in sell-



Fred and Anna Vander Schaaf and children, Shirley and Carl, about 1930.

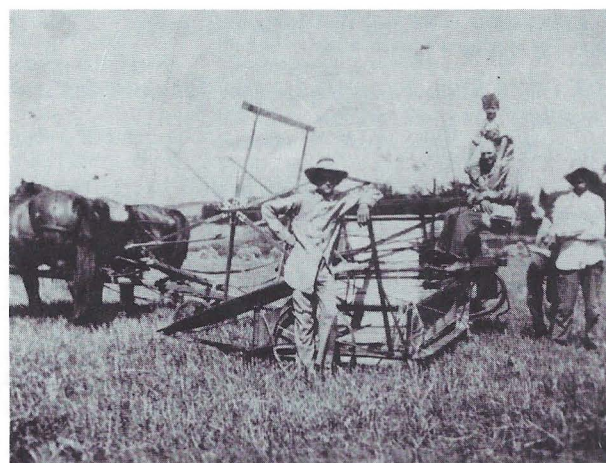
ing Case farm machinery. Fred left the business about 1939. John Pothoven carried on alone for several years with the Case line, repair work and handling feed, until his health caused him to retire in 1945. The Peoria Stockyards later took over the building for its use.



The shop in 1954.

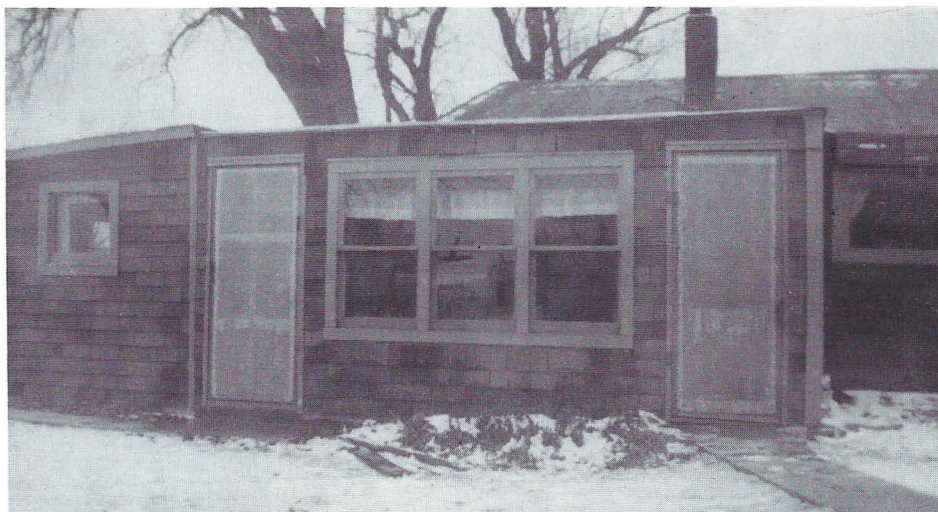


Jake Dunwoody family, 1937. L-R: Amy, Mary, Glen, Jake and Ethel.



Cutting oats with a binder on the Martin Vander Molen farm in 1932. L-R: Ben Vander Molen, "Uncle" Cecil Vander Molen (Lupe Vander Molen on his shoulders), and Jake Vander Molen.





Home of John and Nell Swank.



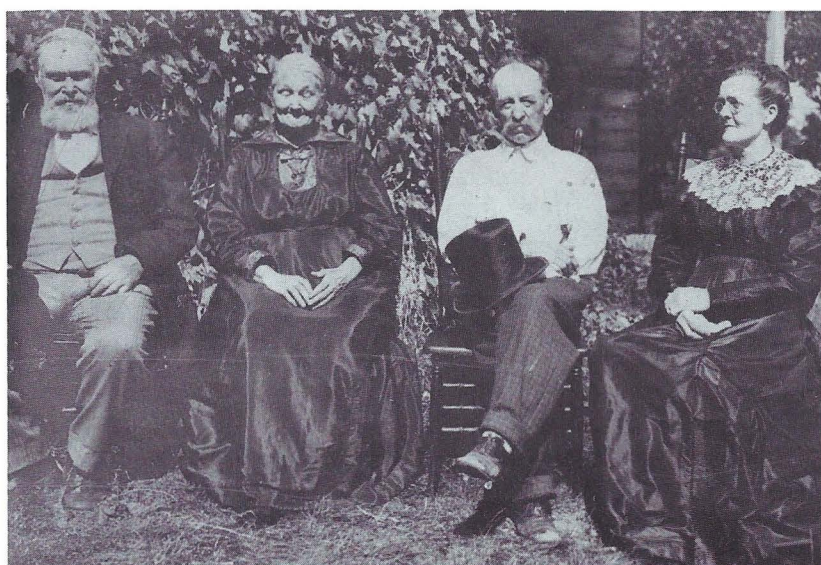
Threshing time about 1925. L-R: Dick DeVries, Gerrit Vander Molen, Pete Pleima, John A. Roose, Fred Vander Schaaf, John Westercamp.



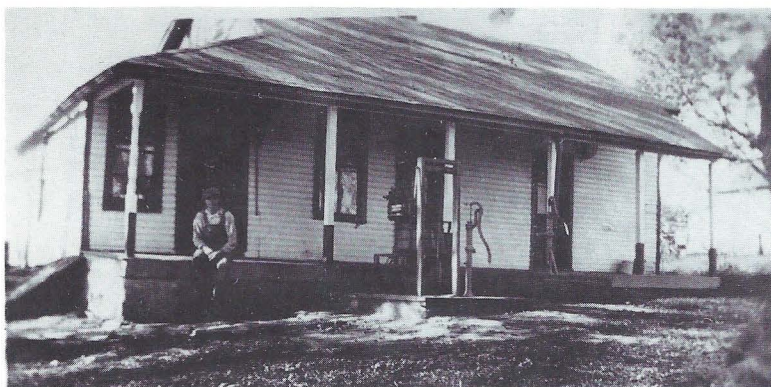
Red Cross Ladies, Town Hall, World War I.



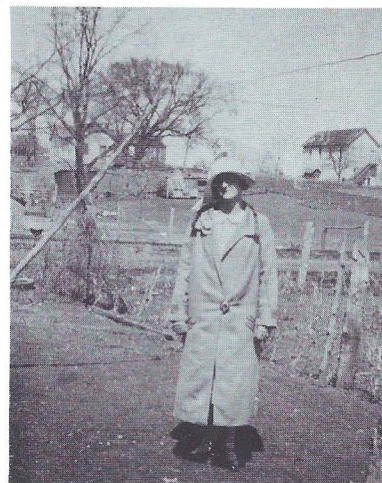
Wilson Allen, Mahala Allen. Masonic Hall in the background.







Home of Dick Vander Veen, Casey Boerefyn, Jacob Vander Molen (seated), and Jupe Deur.



Ethel (Dunwoody) Klein. Masonic Hall upper right, Allen home upper left, 1925.



Home of Johannes Thomassen, Martin Vander Molen, J.J. Stursma, Jacob Dahm, Henry Bosveld, Pete Jonker, Lupe Vander Molen, and Elmer Vander Beek.



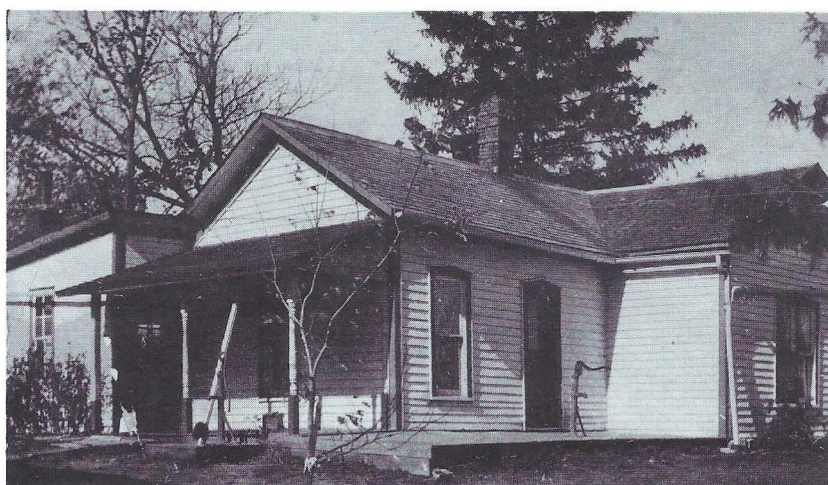
Henry Pothoven with hammer and anvil.



Home of Mrs. DunLevy, Charlie Vos, Cornelius Spoelstra and Junior Deur.



Home of Lot Timbrel, Eliza Samon, Coen Stuursma and Tony Bokhoven.



Home of Louis Crowder (Civil War veteran), Stoffel Grootnibbelink, Dr. Frank Quire, Tabe Vander Veen and Gerrit Slykhuis.





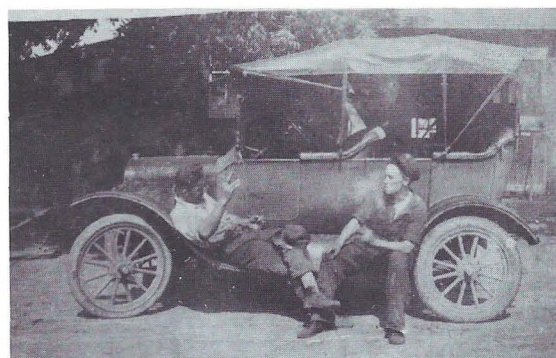
Jake Dunwoody home.



John & Nell Swank, 1946.



Glen Dunwoody, 1940.



1920 Model T Ford. Henry Bosveld (?) left, Henry Pothoven, right.



Jake Dunwoody, caretaker of Richland Township cemeteries.



Home of Mr. Shuey (Shewe), a wagon maker. Later occupied by Gerrit Vander Hart, Martin Vander Molen, Cecil Vander Molen, and Len Dahm.



## Peoria Repair

In 1920 Lewis Ozinga built a shop in the north part of Peoria where Gene Roose's house now stands. It was called Peoria Repair. On the east end of the shop stood a shoe repair machine which was also used to fix and oil harnesses used on the horses. The rest of the building was used to repair cars. He also sold a few Ford cars.

He employed two people at different times, Henry Pothoven and later Pete Pleima. In 1927 Lewis decided to move to Pella and in partnership with Henry Pothoven built a shop at 804 Washington. The building in Peoria was sold to Tabe Vander Veen. Tabe used the lumber to build the blacksmith shop at the foot of the hill. Thus Tabe effectively took care of his competition.

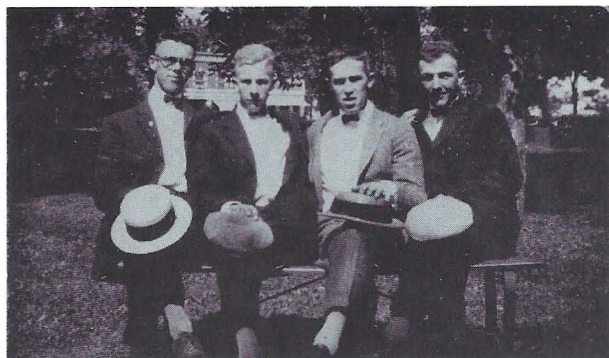
## Tabe's Shop (Richland Auto)

Tabé Vander Veen at one time owned a blacksmith shop on the top of the hill near the Bob Deur residence. In 1927 he had a man named John De Nooy construct the building known today as "the blacksmith shop." He did welding, repair work on cars, harness mending and shoe repair. The shop also had an upstairs used mainly for storage. Here the young men about town would gather and while away a rainy day. They would have contests to see who could lift the most weight. Can you see Jake Vander Molen attempting to carry Charlie Spoelstra?

Tabé died rather unexpectedly in 1950. His brother-in-law Henry Bosveld then took over and stayed until 1961. In 1961, Gerrit Slykhuis moved to Peoria, bought the building and took over the business. Though he lives in Pella, Gerrit occasionally uses the building, burning the midnight oil on various projects.



The blacksmith shop built by Tabe Vander Veen in 1927.



The Harmony Quartet L-R Fred Vander Schaaf, Wm. D. Stursma, Henry Pothoven and Henry Bosveld.

## The Harmony Quartet

A male quartet, which had its beginning in 1925, became well-known in the Peoria and surrounding areas as the Harmony Quartet. It was composed of Fred Vander Schaaf—first tenor, Wm. C. Stursma—second tenor, Henry Pothoven—baritone, and Henry Bosveld—bass.

The group sang religious and patriotic numbers plus a few humorous songs as they provided musical entertainment in the Peoria, New Sharon and surrounding areas. Sometime during the thirties they sang over Radio Station KSO and KRNT in Des Moines. The quartet sang without a piano, using a pitchpipe for the key. Most of their music was sung from memory.

The men sang together for fifteen years, finally disbanding in 1940.

## Tabe's Choir (Peoria Male Chorus)

Tabé Vander Veen was not only the town blacksmith, he also was a self-made musician. He played the organ in the Peoria Church. When there were problems he also repaired it. In 1946, he organized a group of twelve men into what was known as Tabe's Choir or the Peoria Male Chorus.

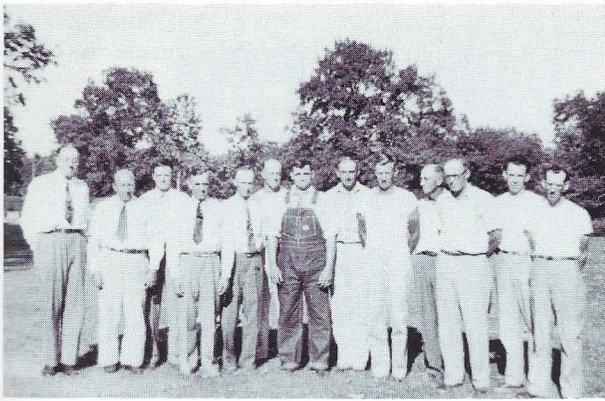
The male chorus was well known in the area. During the eighteen years of its existence it sang in numerous churches, at Old Settler Reunions, at the Knoxville Veterans Hospital and many other places. It was known for the beautiful blending of male voices singing religious music a-cappella.

It was a sad occasion when in 1950 Tabe died of a heart attack. Without their leader, the chorus sang undirected at his funeral.

Henry Bosveld took over the chorus for a time as well as James Brass. Fred Vander Schaaf then directed the group for several more years until about 1964.

L-R: Jack and Lib Duncan, George and Sabra Engle.

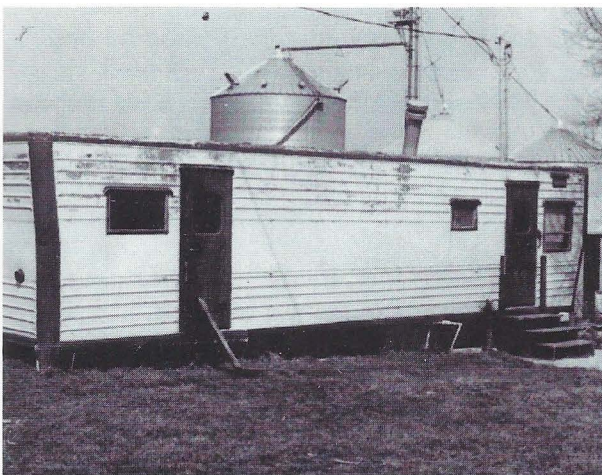




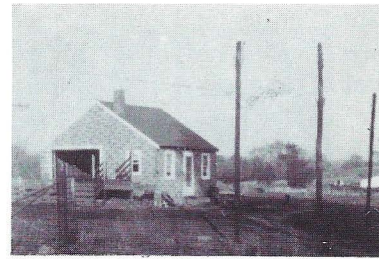
Peoria Male Chorus about 1947, Maytag Park, Newton. L-R: Tabe Vander Veen, Casey Boerefyn, Tom Vander Hart, Tony Nibbelink, Neal Roose, Dick Ryken, Jake Vander Molen, Lambert Niewland, Harold Pothoven, Herman A. De Jong, Bert Swank, Lee Roose, Henry Roose.

### Bandstra Barber Shop

Andrew Bandstra, who moved to Peoria in 1946, had the interesting hobby of being a barber. Being unlicensed, he could not charge for his services and received only what his friends desired to pay him. Many were the little boys who were bribed to sit still with the promise of a sucker. Later one of his granddaughters, Beverly Hoyt, not only occupied his house but owned and operated a beauty shop in a little yellow trailer across the street. It was called Hair Repair and she cut both men's and ladies' hair. It was a flourishing business until she decided to resume her education.



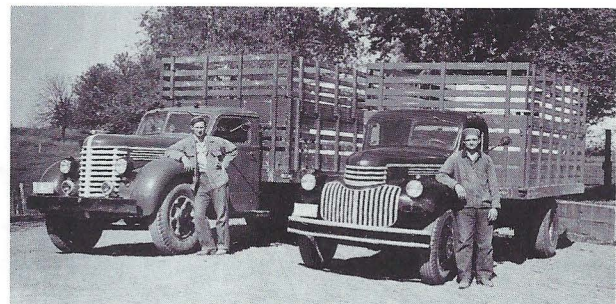
The Hair Repair Shop of Beverly Hoyt.



Peoria Stockyards, 1946.

### Peoria Stockyards

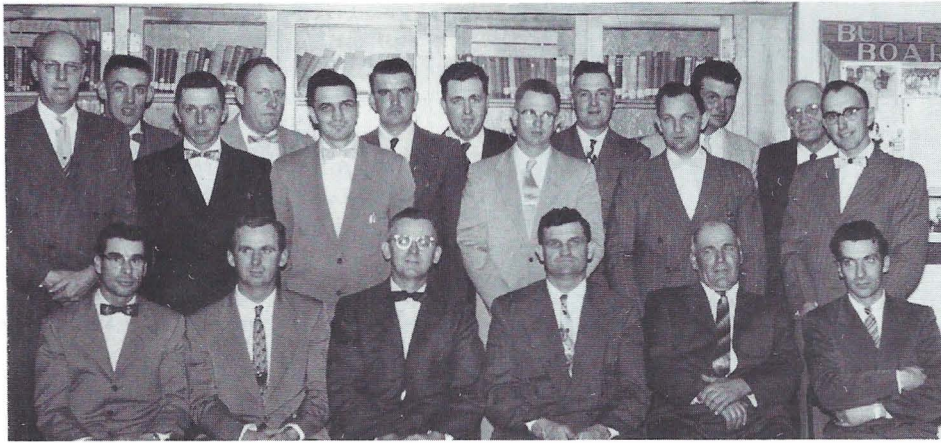
In 1946 Jacob Vander Molen decided to leave the farm and move to Peoria. Casey Boerefyn decided to sell his truck and move to the farm. Thus there was an opening for a trucking business. Jake Vander Molen took advantage of this opportunity by buying a 1946 Chevrolet truck which cost \$1400 without the box. About this time Wm. Vander Molen, just home from the Service, decided to join the partnership. In those days it took a set of chains on the truck to navigate the roads and a set of gum boots on the driver. They soon purchased a 1946 Diamond T truck for \$2000 and were in business. This consisted of buying fat hogs for Macy Stockyards and delivering them to Swift and Co. at Marshalltown and to Rath at Waterloo. The hogs that were handled in the spring and summer of '46 were weighed in at Gerrit Rus for C.O. Macy at Sully.



Bill and Jake Vander Molen, 1946.

By the fall of 1946 Melvin Deur joined the partnership and it was called Vander Molen and Deur. By November of 1946 a small office and scales were ready for use. They also added pens to hold the hogs until they could be reloaded and hauled to a processing plant. The firm bought hogs directly from the farmers and delivered them to the plants in Marshalltown and Waterloo. Trucks ran from early Monday morning until Saturday evening. Sunday trucking was not allowed.





Drivers, first 10 years, Peoria Stockyards, 1956. Front Row, L-R: Fred De Nooy, Jupe Deur, Melve Deur, Jake Vander Molen, Len Dahm, Ray Van Hemert. Middle Row: Rich Vander Wilt, Les Van Wyk, Lupe Vander Molen, Wilbur R.

Veenstra, Bill Vander Molen, Don Van Wyngarden. Back Row: Otto Vos, Art Bokhoven, Arn Ozinga, Gerald Nieuwsma, Vernon Van Ee, Ralph Wichhart, John A. De Jong.

As the business began to expand, other things were added such as a corn shelling business, followed by grain handling. They were in a feed business also for a time. Finally a large barn was built with open sheds to accommodate the large numbers of hogs bought, as well as feeder cattle.

After two years, Wm. Vander Molen sold his share to Jake and Melve and the firm was called Peoria Stockyards. Junior Deur was employed as manager for a few years and also joined the partnership.

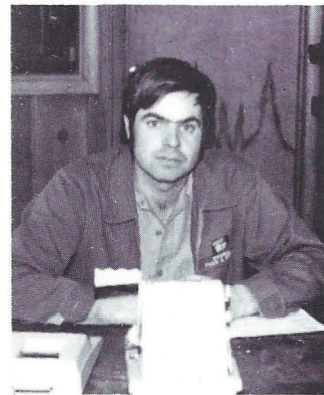
By 1965 they operated six possum belly trucks, two straight trailers, three straight trucks, two pickups and a Volkswagen to take care of livestock and grain hauling. Livestock was hauled to interior points and out of state.

In 1971 they celebrated being in business for 25 years with a pancake day which was well attended.

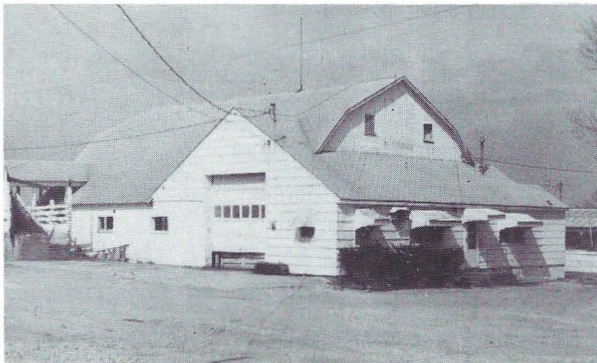
In 1972 Jacob Vander Molen left the firm, selling out to Melvin and Junior Deur.

Today the yards are operated by Wilbur Veenstra and sons in Peoria and Pella.

A thank you to Jake and Nell Vander Molen for the above information.



Wynne Veenstra, manager.



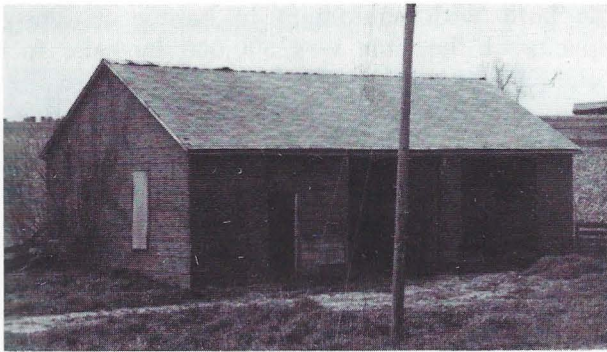
Peoria Stockyards today.

## Roose Repair Shop

Lee and Henry Roose built a small shop in Peoria in 1945. The shop sold tires and did some mechanical work on cars. Lee stayed only one year and then began working at the White Way Auto Company. Henry stayed in the shop alone for a time. In 1946 Lupe Vander Molen took over the shop. He sold gas and tires and serviced cars. Lupe stayed for two years and then went to work



at the Peoria Stockyards. This building was later used for storage of machinery.



The Roose Shop built in 1945.

### Dahm's Store (Peoria Store)

Richard and Dorothy Van Kooten moved to Peoria in 1956 to take over the Peoria Store following the retirement of Jacob Dahm. Jake, however, still continued to work on a part-time basis for the next 23 years.

The buying of eggs was for years an important part of the business. Eggs were brought in and credit given to be used on various purchases. However, as more and more farmers found it unprofitable to have chickens, except in a large way, this practice was finally discontinued in 1983.

At first, Jake Stursma hauled the feed from Wake's Feed Mill in Oskaloosa. He would often make deliveries to the farms with his truck. In 1971 a large feed shed with a dock was added to the store as well as a new pickup for deliveries. This made it easier to keep a much larger supply of feed on hand. An annual event was the Open House held each December featuring hot ham sandwiches and various premiums. In 1981 a Hog



Dahm's Store.

Roast was held at the Recreation Center to which all present and former customers were invited. This was a way of showing appreciation for the past 25 years in business.

On December 1, 1989, Wynne and Patty Veenstra purchased the store from Rich Van Kooten. Their six-year-old business, Veenstra Seed and Chemical, was incorporated into the Peoria Store.

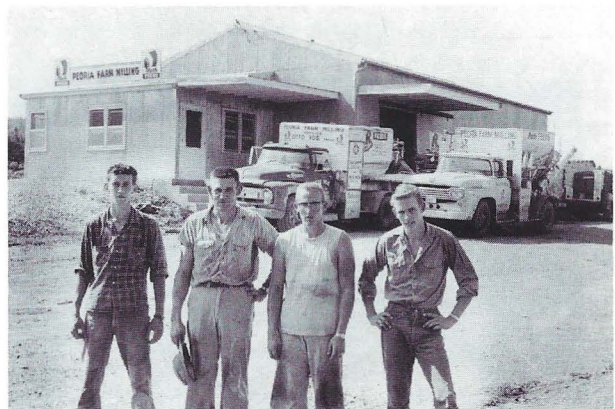


Veenstra Farm and Home Supply.  
Wynne and Patty Veenstra.

### Peoria Farm Milling

Peoria Farm Milling originated in August of 1956. It was a result of a small feed business started by Jake Vander Molen and Melvin Deur, owners of Peoria Stockyards. Most of their hogs were trucked or shipped to Rath Packing at Waterloo. Since Rath was also a feed manufacturer, they brought feed back. They hired Otto Vos as feed salesman in the summer of 1953.

It soon became evident that complete grind and mix feeds with better balanced rations and other disease control additives were replacing ear corn and shell corn feeding with protein fed free



Peoria Farm Milling, 1961. L-R: Gene Roose, Otto Vos, Stan Vos, Melvin Vos.





Peoria Feed and Grain, 1984.

choice. The three men decided together that it would be wise to form separate businesses. Otto bought a portable grinder mixer and offered this service on the farm. A business was formed and named Peoria Farm Milling.

The red Ford truck with grinder mixer and molasses blender traveled the countryside. In 1960 a second portable mixer was added. Stan, Otto's son, and Gene Roose were hired to run this machine.

In the early '60's, another need came. Farmers were raising more hogs with the convenience of complete feed in self-feeders and they needed more corn than they could raise. Peoria Farm Milling became a grain dealer. With the arrival of the "picker-sheller" or "combine" came the need for Grain Banking, storing the farmer's corn and returning it to him in complete feed.

With these needs in mind, the grind-mix room with seven overhead protein supply bins and six load-out bins with a minimum of 12,000 bu. grain storage was built in 1962. It was at this time that Mr. Henry VanderLinden was hired as full-time bookkeeper and office manager and worked for the company until his death in 1972. The name of the company was changed to Peoria Feed and Grain and became an Iowa corporation on Jan. 17, 1966.



Peoria Farm Supply. L-R: Faye Foster, Stan Pothoven, Junior Deur, David Steenhoek.

In the early 1970s, more storage facilities were added. Gene Roose became a business partner at this time. All through the 70s more storage room was built with equipment to handle it. The capacity at the time was 500,000 bushels. In September of 1982, Gene Roose purchased all shares of Peoria Feed and Grain from Otto.

In 1990, David Steenhoek took over the business from Gene Roose. It is now called Peoria Farm Supply. At present the business employs five people.

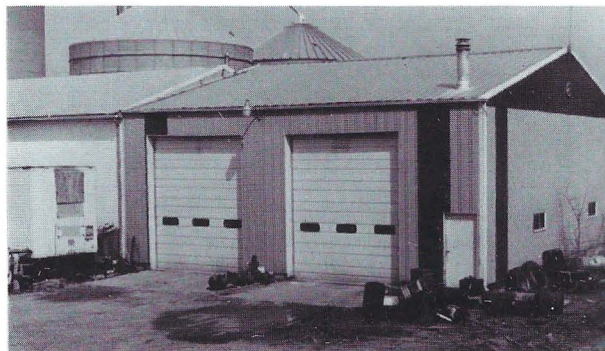
## Peoria Truck and Farm Repair

The Peoria Stockyards had long needed a shop to service their trucks. Before 1963 they had used the old shop of Fred Vander Schaaf. In 1963 they decided to tear this building down and build a new cement block building. This was located across the street from the Stockyards building. In 1965 Gerald Rozenboom was hired as a mechanic. He had previously driven one of their trucks for eight years and worked for them seven years in that building.

In September of 1970, Gerald Rozenboom decided to rent the Richland Auto Building (Blacksmith Shop) and go out on his own as a mechanic and blacksmith. He did this for one and one-half years.

In July of 1974 Ron Vander Linden and Gerald became partners and bought the stockyards building calling it V and R Repair. In September of 1975 Ron Vander Linden sold his interest in the business to Gerald Rozenboom. In 1977 the business was incorporated and Gerald's sons Wavern and later Dennis joined the company.

An addition was added to the building in 1978. Gerald's wife Geneva, is the bookkeeper. Various people were employed over the years such as Darrell Groenendyk, Keith Jansen, Ron Hoksbergen and Irvin Rozenboom.



Peoria Truck and Farm Repair, 1984.



In September of 1979, Gerald and Wavern acquired a truck tractor which they leased out. This was the beginning of a new business called Peoria Truck Lines. They now have five tractors and five trailers with walking floors.



Gerald, Dennis and Wavern Rozenboom, owners.

## The Peoria Softball Team

A few of the former residents of Peoria recall getting together to play softball during the depression days of the 1930s. Ball diamonds did not exist in those days so a playing field was made wherever a flat area in a pasture was available.

In the late 1930s, a group of young men from the Peoria Church organized a softball team that played each Labor Day in a church league tournament with teams from other Christian Reformed churches. This became an all-day event with young people attending from Prairie City, Sully, Pella, Tracy and other areas. The location was a Ver Meer field east of Pella. Rather than the usual nine-man team which exists today, these teams consisted of ten players with the tenth man being a rover in the outfield. Those players who participated and remember the event, say that Peoria's toughest competition was the team from Prairie City, but that Peoria almost always won!

A more organized effort at an official Peoria softball team took place in the early 1940s. The team began as the Peoria Blue Devils but fearing disapproval of their name, they opted for the less controversial name of the Peoria Blue Eagles. Their official uniform was a blue and yellow jersey bearing the name of the team.

Their roster included the following:

Andy Bandstra - Catcher  
Dale De Young - First base  
Jim Bandstra - Second base  
Arn Vander Hart - Third base

John Vander Hart - Fielder  
Cecil Vander Molen - Fielder  
Hank Van Wyngarden - Fielder  
Cornie Van Wyngarden - Pitcher and shortstop  
Marion Vander Linden - Pitcher and shortstop  
An added touch of humor was the nicknames these players received.

Andy Bandstra - "Poosie"  
Arn Vander Hart - "Muscle Head"  
Cornie Van Wyngarden - "Lou"  
Dale De Young - "Shaver"  
John Vander Hart - "Kook"  
Marion Vander Linden - "Bummy"



The Peoria Labor Day Tournament team. L-R: Bert Bandstra, Vernon Van Ee, Bill Bandstra, Bill Van Der Molen, Bill Nibbelink, Cornie Van Wyngarden, Frank Blom, Bill Bouwer, Arie Dahm, Gerrit Bandstra, Cornie Dahm. Picture taken 1939.

Sometimes they played as often as three times a week. They had no diamond of their own so they used whatever facility was available. Sometimes they played on the diamond in Taintor and other times on level fields and pastures on surrounding farms.

Early in their career they won nine games straight. A few years after their organization, some of the young men of their group were called from the carefree game of softball to the sobering task of defending their country. Following the war, many of these young men continued to play softball, but never again under the colors and name of the Peoria Blue Eagles.

Our apologies to anyone who may have been forgotten.

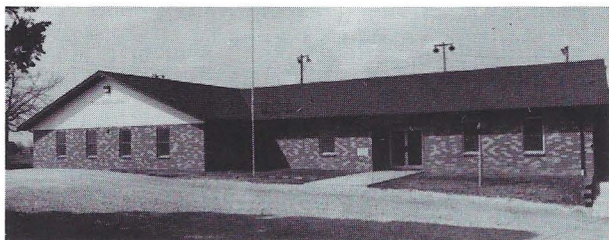
## Peoria Today

Peoria today is a neatly kept village populated mostly with people of Dutch descent. The paving of the highway has made it much easier to live in



Peoria even though some residents work elsewhere.

The Christian School Society decided to tear down the old two-story building in the summer of 1983. The building was badly in need of repair or remodeling. On the last day of school, all the children enjoyed carrying out all of the books and supplies to the gym for storage. Though it was an extremely hot summer, the work began on a new



Peoria Christian School.



Peoria Christian Reformed Church.



Peoria Christian School Recreation Center.

brick one-story building. The new building contains five classrooms, a library and offices. Present teachers include Mrs. Jan Vande Voort, Brenda Terpstra, Mrs. Tammy Zevenbergen, Mrs. Nancy Ten Napel, Mrs. Connie Stout, Ron Zwiers, Mrs. Iris Vander Wal, Mrs. Myrna Goodyk, Mrs. Sylvia Nieuwsma, and principal Tom Ritzema.

The Recreation Center was built in 1976-77. This is connected to the school and houses a

basketball court as well as kitchen facilities. It is also used for the needs of the church and community. Many anniversaries and family gatherings are held here.

The parsonage adjacent to the church was also replaced in 1982-83. Many people felt very nostalgic seeing the old parsonage disappear. The large house had a huge attic for the top floor and also a porch on the roof used by sunbathers and curious children. Indeed the minister's wife would often employ someone to keep the large house clean. It has been replaced with a lovely three bedroom brick home with a walkout basement. Reverend Ronald Bouwkamp is the current pastor.



The original parsonage which served for years as the residence of the Christian School principal. A new teacherage was built in 1987.

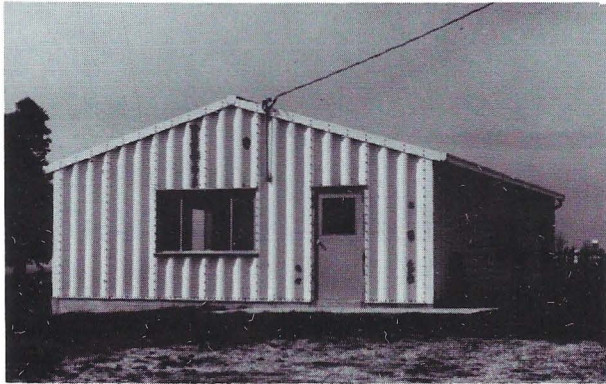


The new parsonage, 1983.

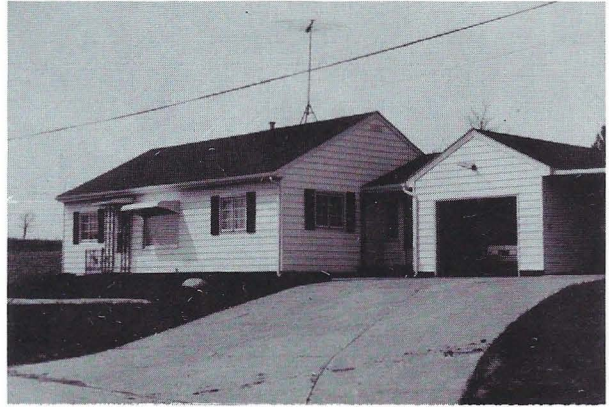
The town hall was replaced in 1970 at a cost of \$8000. The old hall was difficult to heat and in poor condition. The steel building contains the voting machine. It is also used for family gatherings.



The town today is a peaceful residential area with well-kept homes and lawns. The residents number about eighty people.

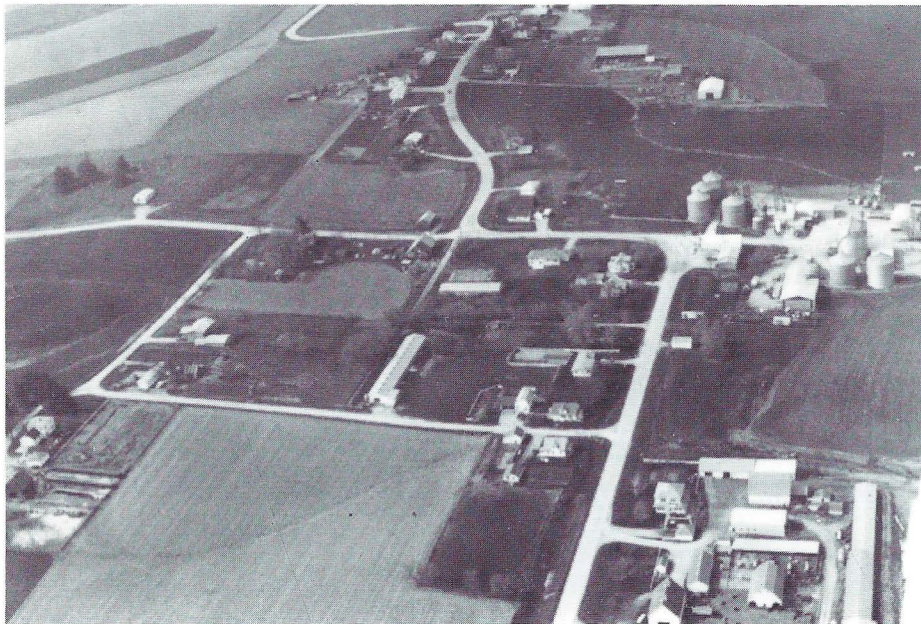
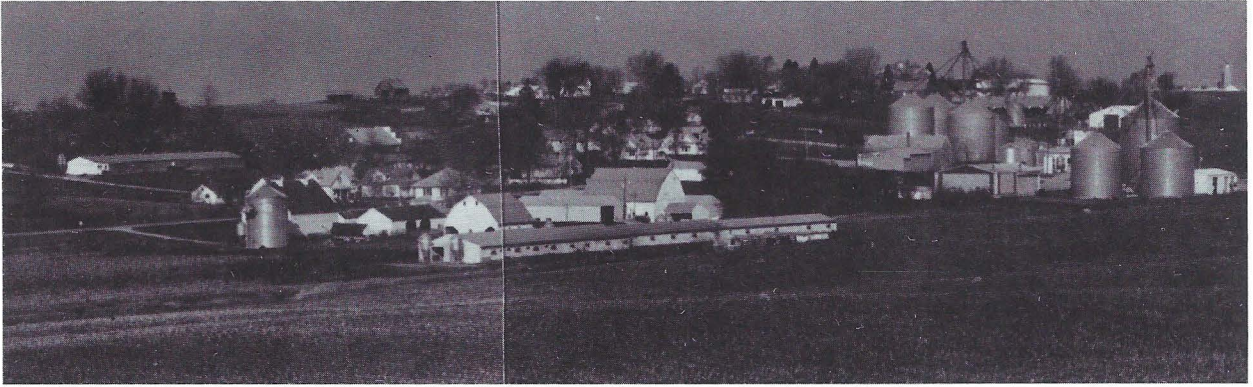


Richland Township Hall built 1970.



Home of Mr. and Mrs. Dale Rozendaal, was once the home of Dr. Ayres.





Aerial View of Peoria, Iowa, 1983.



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## Notable Incidents (1940-1990)

One of the earliest accidents occurred in front of the Peoria store. In those days the store was open two evenings a week. Tunis Blom and Cecil Vander Molen, Sr. were trading a few punches as boys will do when Mr. Vander Molen fell. To everyone's surprise, his leg was broken.

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A bad thunderstorm in the early forties provided a strange sight when John Van Gorp got up the next morning. His cows had sought shelter under a large tree that stood near the repair shop. Seven of the cows were dead under a tree. The tree had been struck by lightning. The rest of the cows gave no milk that day.

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On a Saturday night in the early '40's a man was killed on Temptation Corner. His name is unknown. The corner was not well marked. Several cars and trucks have missed this corner and have landed in a farmer's field or broken down the sign.

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Living in a small town also had its happy times. Many were the couples subjected to a shivaree after a wedding. Woe to the young man who had been unmerciful in the treatment of his married friends, when his turn came.

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Young people enjoyed driving their cars around the church—increasing the wrath of the powers-that-be. Who could sleep when these mufflers made such loud noises?

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One day the consistory had had enough. The young people always occupied two rows in the back of church and were known to be noisy. Without a word the consistory decided to take these rows and sit there at the next service. The young people having heard this was about to occur, took seats in the two rows the consistory would normally be seated in. It is not known how long this lasted. A practical joke indeed.

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Another time we saw a preacher's son and his friends having their own service on top of the parsonage roof. The parsonage had a flat roof on top and taking advantage of his father's absence, he decided to have a little fun. He timed the performance just as church was letting out. As the people filed out of church, the music began, openly announcing they had not been in church. We haven't heard what happened to that young man when his father returned home.

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One day the Peoria Stockyards decided their 5000 gal. gas tank had become empty much earlier than was normal. The tank had developed a leak and the gas had gone into the nearby creek. A film could be seen on top of the water. Someone lit a match to the water and the fire roared all the way down the creek, a sight to behold!

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A real tragedy was the death of four boys on the Peoria-Pella highway two miles southeast of the town. This happened in September of 1974. Duane Pleima, David Van Hulzen, and Vernon and Larry Newendorp (brothers) missed a curve in the road and hit the dirt embankment of an intersecting road. The car immediately caught fire. The boys were pinned in the wreckage. Such a sad story. The people who came to help were unable to rescue them and stood by helplessly.



Peoria had its people who were real characters and are fondly remembered. We would like to close by recognizing just a few of them.

**J. J. Stursma:** He loved to tell stories. Working in the Peoria Store gave him many people for an audience.

**Jake Stursma:** Long-time janitor of the Peoria Church. He is remembered for his love of gardening and his ability to make all sorts of things out of wood.

**John A. De Jong:** The County Supervisor turned bus driver who made the best of it when his wife died very young, leaving him with two small daughters to raise.

**Andrew Bandstra:** The Justice of the Peace, who to his utter amazement was called on to marry a young couple one day.

**Leonard Dahm:** Who can forget his red pickup truck with the door he had to hold shut in order to drive it?

**Jacob Dahm:** Self-educated theologian, philosopher and reader, who was not afraid to pass his views on to whoever would listen.

There are many more that could be mentioned.



## Life In a Small Town

How do you know you are living in a small town? We would like to quote Ann Landers.

1. You don't use your turn signal because everyone knows where you are going.
2. You dial a wrong number and talk for fifteen minutes anyway.
3. You call every dog on the street by name and he wags his tail at you.
4. The day of your father's funeral the neighbors bring enough food to feed an army.
5. You drive into a ditch five miles out in the country and word gets back to your family before you do.

Small towns and the people in them are the backbone of America. What would we do without them?



Dorothy Van Kooten  
James P. Dahm  
1993







